

NARRATIVES,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

THE PASSIONS AND AFFECTIONS

OF THE

HUMAN MIND.

BY JOHN CORRY,

AUTHOR OF "A SATIRICAL VIEW OF LONDON."

"I feel that I have a Soul, nor can all the books with which Materialists have pestered the World, ever convince me of the contrary."—STERNE.

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EDWY AND BERTHA;

OR,

The Force of Connubial Love.

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THE THIRD EDITION.\*  
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ENGLAND was harassed by Danish invaders, when Alfred ascended the throne, about the middle of the ninth century. That prince, highly endowed by nature, had been educated at Rome; and, on his return to his native country, signalized himself by his zeal and intrepidity in the repulsion of the Danes. During the reign of his brother Ethelbert, he had fought several battles with the invaders; but his consummate valour, wisdom, and vigilance, could not prevent those barbarians from becoming masters of the sea-coast, and some of the finest counties in the kingdom.

Several officers distinguished themselves under the command of Alfred, but none had achieved

* This Tale was first published by the Author in 1802; it was generally approved by the Reviewers and the Public, in consequence of which two large impressions were soon sold. It has since been PIRATED by a RESPECTABLE Publisher, who committed this BOLD FLAGIARISM, though the Tract was regularly entered at Stationer's Hall as the Author's copyright!

such exploits, or risen to such distinguished honours, as Ethelwold, a nobleman of uncommon military talents, and the most enthusiastic patriotism. He had served in the English army many years, and risen by his merit to the honourable station of second in command, next to his royal General.

To this hero Alfred entrusted the important task of repelling the Danes, who were constantly endeavouring to extend their conquests in England. The fertility of the country, the mildness of the climate, and the excellence of its productions, incited the bold invaders to aim at the conquest of the whole kingdom; and their possession of the coast enabled them to obtain constant reinforcements from Denmark.

An army of twenty thousand Danes having landed on the coast of Northumberland, under the command of Brumar, an experienced general, Ethelwold marched, with nearly an equal number of chosen men, to attack the enemy.

The hostile armies met on a plain in Yorkshire, and engaged in one of the most desperate and sanguinary contests ever known. The adverse ranks fought hand to hand, except a body of English archers, whose skill thinned the lines of the enemy. The Danes, armed with swords and shields, penetrated the ranks of the English, and surrounded Ethelwold. A Danish warrior, with a dreadful blow of his faulchion, cleft the hero's helmet, and wounded him deeply. He fell, and

while his ferocious foes endeavoured to cut him to pieces, a reinforcement of the English compelled them to retire.

This timely aid was brought by Edwy, a young officer, who had that day slain numbers of the enemy. He came at the critical moment when the arm of a Danish warrior was raised against the prostrate and wounded Ethelwold. The brave Edwy, with a generosity known only to great minds, sprung forward to ward off the blow. The sword of the foe took another direction, and, penetrating the vizor of Edwy, deeply wounded his left cheek. He raised his general, gave him in charge to a party of English archers, who carried him to the rear, and rallying the troops, assailed the Danes, and was completely victorious.

Nearly one-half of the invading army were killed and wounded, their general slain, and the discomfited residue forced to seek shelter in Northumberland.

When the battle was over, and Ethelwold's wounds dressed, he enquired for Edwy. That youthful warrior came, wounded and fatigued as he was. His general embraced him. "Noble fellow-soldier," he cried, "to your valour our country owes the glory of another victory, and to your generous aid I owe my life: Alfred shall be told of your merit: rewards and honours await you." "General," replied the unassuming Edwy, "I have only done my duty, and to the last hour

of my existence I shall recollect, with pleasure, my preserving our brave commander from the sword of an insulting enemy, and retrieving the glory of England." He then retired to have his wounds dressed.

A few days after this decisive victory, a deputation from the enemy made peace with Alfred, and agreed to embrace Christianity, and live within the bounds of Northumberland, provided they were unmolested by the English.

Peace being thus restored, the English army was disbanded ; and Ethelwold, accompanied by Edwy and several of the principal officers, went to the Court of Alfred.

That great prince received them with his habitual benignity, and in the presence of the barons, presented Edwy with a sword, which he had himself often wielded victoriously against the foe. Edwy kissed the hand of his Sovereign, and the gift which it presented ; and the King, in the course of a conversation with him on the art of war, was so fully convinced of his abilities, that he appointed him next in command to Ethelwold.

But a greater honour than could be conferred even by his Sovereign yet awaited the happy Edwy. He was invited by Ethelwold to a visit at his castle in Hampshire. They travelled from London in the month of June, when Nature appeared in the highest state of vegetative beauty ; as they passed along, their ears were delighted

with the melody of the birds in the woods ; the pipe of the shepherd on the hills ; and the song of the husbandman and village-maid in the cultivated valleys. The landscape presented a cheerful scene of vernal luxuriance that gave promise of an abundant harvest, while peace, plenty, and security, seemed to preside over the happy country.

Our warriors shared the spontaneous cheerfulness of nature, and felt a proud and generous consciousness, that they had contributed to the happiness diffused around. “ Brother soldier,” said Ethelwold, “ behold the reward of our toils and dangers ; our country is free, the people are happy, and Providence has made us the honourable instruments of promoting this general felicity.” “ Yes, General,” replied Edwy, “ I sympathize with you in the sweets of liberty and peace, and shall, till my last breath, endeavour to preserve those precious gifts of heaven.”

They now arrived in sight of the lofty and time-worn turrets of Ethelwold’s castle.

Their approach was announced by the animating sounds of the trumpet, and the drawbridge in front of the castle was let down. They passed over the moat, and entered the square, where a military corps of one hundred men, commanded by veteran officers, were drawn up to salute their general and his companion.

Passing into the hall, Ethelwold was received with every mark of affection by his consort, Lady

Catharine ; but his daughter, according to the custom of the times, remained retired till summoned to attend her father.

In less than an hour after their arrival at the castle, Cerdic, a young prince of the Saxon line, appeared before the gate, attended by a numerous train of military officers, many of whom had distinguished themselves under the command of Ethelwold. That hero hastened to receive his visitors, and a plentiful entertainment was prepared for their reception.

Ethelwold treated Cerdic with distinguished respect, introduced Edwy to the prince, and they sat down to dinner with that cordial urbanity which is so delightful to the human heart.

Lady Catharine presided at the festive board ; and, during the repast, a bard, clothed in a robe of azure silk, chaunted the exploits of heroes to the melodious sounds of his harp. The richest wines of the continent sparkled in cups of gold, and convivial hilarity illuminated every countenance.

But the most exquisite zest of the banquet had not yet been tasted by the amorous Cerdic. That prince loved Bertha, the youthful and beauteous daughter of Ethelwold, and the object of his visit was, to breathe his vows before her.

Ethelwold, desirous to give Edwy a public testimony of his gratitude for having saved his life, had privately directed his daughter to prepare a wreath of laurel, and place it on the youthful warrior's brow, as an honorary mark of particular respect.

On a signal given, a folding-door was opened, and Bertha, attended by a train of fair maidens, clothed in white, entered the great hall, where Ethelwold sat with his guests. She was dressed in a flowing robe of white silk, a veil concealed her face, and she carried a crown of intermingled laurel and roses in her hand. She advanced with a stately but modest air, and stood before her father. "Where, my Lord," cried she, "is the hero who preserved my father's life in the moment of danger?" "There, my child," replied Ethelwold, pointing to Edwy, "there is my brother soldier; observe his left cheek, it is seamed with the scar of a wound recently healed, which he received in my defence."

Bertha gazed on the generous Edwy: she approached him, while he respectfully rose. "Permit me, noble warrior," she cried, "to crown the preserver of my father." He knelt before her, and while she hastily adorned his brow with civic honours, her gentle bosom was agitated with a new emotion. Edwy seized her fair hand, and pressed it to his lips. The young lady then returned the salute of the company, who had risen on her entrance, and slowly withdrew.

Ethelwold followed her, and leading her back by the hand, placed her beside her mother. "This is a day of festivity and joy, my daughter," exclaimed he, with a cheerful voice; "I wish you to participate our mirth for a few moments. Unveil, my child, and, by that token of respect for our

guests, prove that they are welcome to your father's castle."

She obeyed, and every eye was turned with admiration on her beauties, while the timid blush of virgin modesty overspread a face and bosom ineffably lovely.

Cerdic approached, and, respectfully kissing her hand, entered into a conversation, which appeared irksome to Bertha. Her eye sometimes wandered in search of Edwy, who sat adorned with the honours conferred by her hand. The gift was dangerous; for the serpent of love lay encircled amidst the roses that bloomed on his brow, and he could not behold the familiarity of Cerdic without an emotion of sorrow.

In the course of a few minutes the ladies withdrew, leaving the warriors to quaff the exhilarating juice of the grape.

Bertha retired to her apartment, whispering, "O, how beautiful is that manly cheek, marked with the honourable scar of a wound received in defence of my father! I love it, and long to impress upon it a kiss of affection!" She blushed as these words involuntarily escaped her lips. They were the dictates of enthusiasm, but they were also the offspring of the heart; for Bertha loved Edwy.

The ambition of Ethelwold was flattered by the hope of an alliance with Cerdic. That prince was young, rich, and brave; but there was a haughtiness in his demeanour, which seemed to demand the submission of all around him, and even in the

moments of tenderness, his pride rendered him an awkward and unpleasing lover.

Such a man was not qualified to gain the affection of Bertha, who was frank, generous, and courteous, but possessed of magnanimity, which looked down on the splendour of rank, unless combined with personal merit. Cerdic possessed the former : Edwy was endowed with the latter. His merit was indeed his only possession, but it was so pre-eminent, that like a star, it was conspicuous by its own lustre.

With respect to personal beauty, Cerdic was a much handsomer man than Edwy : the prince was tall and elegantly formed ; he danced, rode with grace, and was expert at the tournament. Edwy was agreeable. His form was athletic, and calculated to endure the rigour of a winter's campaign ; his limbs were well formed, muscular, and active ; his countenance, the living image of valour, generosity, and goodness. Unskilled in the etiquette of a court, he was the rough, honest, yet unassuming soldier ; the steady unostentatious patriot. Such was the man whom the heart of Bertha secretly preferred to the pompous and imperious Cerdic.

On the following day, Cerdic was admitted to a private interview with Bertha ; but his vanity was wounded on finding his reception more cold, formal, and reserved, than he had hitherto experienced. His awkward gallantry served to divert Bertha, and she would have laughed at his ridi-

culous professions, delivered rather in the tone of command than persuasion ; but she suppressed her risibility, lest she should irritate the princely suitor ; or, perhaps, embolden him to become too familiar. He retired under the influence of spleen ; for, though he loved the lady, his characteristic pride predominated over his tenderness.

Immediately after their interview, Cerdic quitted the castle, attended by a pompous train, and with a heart inflated with pride. Edwy continued under the hospitable roof of Ethelwold, and, being considered as an intimate friend, was admitted to a familiar intercourse with Bertha and her mother. In their society he found a rich reward for all his former perils, while the beauty of the circumjacent country, and the social enjoyments which he participated, rendered this retirement a perfect paradise.

In the various scenes of danger to which Edwy had been exposed, he had ever been victorious ; but the universal conqueror, Love, now chained him to the chariot-wheels of beauty, and the laurel was resigned for the sweet and elegant myrtle.

Two minds, so noble as those of Bertha and Edwy, could not long conceal their fond emotions from each other. He privately declared his passion, and she heard him with joy. Under the impulse of generous sentiments, she blushing acknowledged a reciprocal tenderness, and vows of eternal love were interchanged.

The rank and influence of Cerdic, however, excited some apprehension in the mind of Edwy, that Ethelwold would object to his daughter's union with a soldier of fortune, when a prince sought her hand. Bertha, whose gentle bosom also shared these fears, consented to indulge her lover with secret interviews in the gardens of the castle; where she listened to the music of love, breathed from the lips of a hero.

A melancholy event, however, removed every obstacle to the union of the lovers, while it filled their minds with affliction. Hunting was the favourite amusement of Ethelwold, who spent day after day in the pleasures of the chase, attended by a numerous train of vassals. The stag flying before his fleet hounds with the velocity of the wind was the delight of his soul, while his spirited steed was always foremost in the pursuit, and in at the death.

One fine morning in autumn, he set out from his castle, never to return! Lady Catharine and his daughter Bertha saw him on horseback, and, kissing his hand, bade him good morning. He paused for a moment, and viewed them with a look of affection—it was a last look—and, at the same moment, a mournful foreboding of some misfortune filled the eyes of his lady with involuntary tears.

The cheerful horns of the huntsmen, and the animating cry of the hounds, soon dissipated all gloomy ideas from the mind of Ethelwold; and Edwy, who attended at his side, conversed with

his wonted cheerfulness. A stag was started, and led the hunters a rapid chace of several miles. The affrighted animal, close pressed by the hounds, bounded through a thicket into a rocky dell—the pack pursued in full cry, and Ethelwold, who came up at the moment, was so animated, that, not perceiving the danger, he set spurs to his horse, and dashing through the underwood, was precipitated headlong among the craggy rocks, and killed on the spot.

Edwy arrived in time to witness the tragical death of his friend. He sprung out of his saddle, descended to the fatal spot, and found Ethelwold quite dead. Filled with horror, he collected the huntsmen ; who, forming a bier of some branches of oak, proceeded with the body to the castle.

About midnight, Edwy arrived at the scene of his former happiness, which was now converted into a house of mourning. The grief of Lady Catharine was excessive ; that of the beauteous Bertha more moderate, yet exquisite. The remains of Ethelwold were interred in the family-vault of the castle, and a requiem chaunted for the repose of his soul, according to the superstitious custom of the times.

Some days after that mournful event, the will of the deceased was read, by which it appeared that Edwy was appointed executor. The terms in which that part of the will was couched, were strongly expressive of the dangerous profession which Edwy had chosen, and the unsettled times

in which he lived. “In consideration,” said the testator, “of the valour and virtue of my dear brother-soldier Edwy, I nominate him my sole executor, if he survives me; and should he afterwards fall in the defence of his country, I will that the care of my widow and daughter shall devolve on the illustrious Alfred himself.”

Tears of regret bedewed the eyes of Edwy while he entered on the sacred charge. Lady Catharine considered it as some mitigation of her misfortune that so worthy a man was appointed to manage her affairs; and when the lenient hand of time had healed the wounds of grief, she readily consented to the union of Edwy and Bertha.

Accordingly the marriage was solemnized in the presence of Alfred, and several of his courtiers, who came on purpose to do honour to the nuptials.

Happiness once more smiled on the turrets of Shene castle; the voice of love vibrated on the soft breezes that surrounded it, and scenes of festivity, agreeable to the hospitable manners of the age, offered an abundant refection to all visitors.

Edwy was the happiest of men; the possession of Bertha was the summit of his highest ambition, and the complacency of his sovereign enhanced his felicity. A tournament, in honour of the nuptials, was held on a plain near the castle, and the flower of the English nobility delighted the eyes of the multitude by feats of agility, and exploits which manifested the daring intrepidity of their hearts. Among others, Edwy was emulous to distinguish

himself before his royal master. But though gifted with the most consummate hardihood, which smiled at the danger he despised, Edwy was not dextrous at wielding the lance. The sabre and the battle-axe were more familiar, and the field of real danger was the scene of his glory, while the lists of chivalry were seldom visited by him. This circumstance was known to the vengeful Cerdic, who, when he saw Edwy enter the lists, advanced against him in disguise ; and, on the trumpets' sounding a charge, by superior management of the lance, unhorsed, and dangerously wounded, his opponent.

Edwy was carried off the field to his castle, where his wounds were dressed, and he was attended by his mournful bride.

Alfred visited him, and expressed his indignation against the hostile knight, who, disguised, had, contrary to the law of chivalry, aimed at the destruction of his opponent. Edwy mentioned his suspicion that Cerdic was the man, and the king was of the same opinion.

On the recovery of Edwy, to prevent any future treachery, Alfred appointed him governor of York, which, as it was remote from the court, would render it more difficult for the revengeful Cerdic or his friends to pursue any plot without detection. At the same time the high authority with which Edwy was invested might deter his antagonist.

About three months after the arrival of Edwy in York, a formidable host, commanded by Rufan,

a famous general, sailed from Denmark, and landed on the northern coast of England. The Northumbrian Danes abjuring their fealty to Alfred, and rejecting the religion which they had been compelled to embrace, hastened in thousands to the standards of their invading countrymen ; and their general, encouraged by such powerful reinforcements, penetrated, by forced marches, into the country, as far as Aldborough.

Edwy, apprised of this formidable invasion, dispatched a courier with the news to Alfred, and collected his forces, to impede the progress of the enemy till the arrival of the main army.

Zealous in the cause of his country, he summoned the citizens of York to meet him at the market-cross. They hastened to obey a governor whose talents were devoted to their safety ; and, inspired by his animating eloquence, they armed with alacrity. Edwy dispatched messengers with trumpets, to collect such of the peasantry as generously preferred death to slavery, and many hundreds of the warlike youth of Yorkshire hastened to defend their native land.

But though Edwy, in his official capacity, was ardent, active, and determined, his bosom felt an agonizing pang at the thought of parting with Bertha. But the time was come, when, instead of viewing the smooth and serene brow of consenting beauty, he must brave the stern visage of a relentless foe. Instead of the downy couch of connubial love, he must now repose on straw,

in the tented field ; and his warlike head, instead of being enwreathed with flowers by his lady's fair hand, must now bear the pressure of the plummy helmet.

When Bertha first heard of the danger to which her beloved husband must necessarily be exposed, she hastened to her chamber, and, unseen, shed the tears of womanish sorrow. Her tender but magnanimous bosom, was convulsed with the struggle between love and patriotism ; but the latter prevailed—yes, her country's weal was dearer to the excellent Bertha than even Edwy himself.

Under the influence of this patriotic sentiment, she visited her lord, and found him in the armoury of the castle, delivering arms to the brave citizens, who volunteered on the occasion. On the approach of Bertha, he turned pale. The man, who the moment before was anticipating the glories of victory, now trembled in the presence of a woman ! And why ? lest he should be unsuccessful, and ruin betide his Bertha.

She approached ; he pressed her fair hand ; and, giving directions to his officers to prepare the troops for an immediate march, retired with his lady.

Those who know the endearing ties of conjugal affection, and those only, can conceive the exquisite fondness and sorrow of Edwy and Bertha on this trying occasion.

When alone, he addressed her in the tender and affecting language of consolation : spoke of the

certainty of conquest, and the hope of returning to her arms covered with new honours. He expatiated on the reliance which his sovereign had on his fidelity and promptitude, but entreated her to retire from York to London, lest any disaster should befall the army under his command, which might prove fatal to her safety and honour. Bertha listened with placid dignity to her husband, and, with a voice harmonized by love, replied, “My dear Edwy, I know your worth, and that any exhortation of mine would be only an insult to your patriotism. The dangers to which you will unavoidably be exposed would appal my soul, did I not feel a zeal for our country predominant over every selfish emotion. I wish I were a man, that I might accompany you, and fight by your side—Go, my husband—may victory gild your banners with new glory—may the English lion triumph over the Danish raven—accept this kiss as the seal of my love, my hope, and my patriotism—may Heaven crown you with conquest.” Saying this, she embraced her husband—then hastily turning away, retired to her apartment, where tears again relieved the concealed anguish of her heart.

Edwy felt himself animated with new ardour, when he reflected, with admiration, on the magnanimity of his spouse. “She is inspired by heaven,” said he, “her prayer is the presage of victory!—let me hasten to win the blood-stained wreath of glory.”

He hastily armed, and mounted on a charger, joined the troops, who were drawn up in two bat-

talions, in the principal street. The army consisted of about five thousand men. The warlike spirit of Edwy kindled at the sight ; his bosom glowed with the heroic enthusiasm which had been so effectually raised by Bertha. He rode along the lines, and, halting in the centre, thus harangued his soldiers.

“ Countrymen, fellow-citizens, and soldiers! the pirates of the North have again presumed to invade the shores of England ; but discomfiture and death await those ferocious marauders, who come with an intention to overturn our altars, despoil our mansions, and violate our beautiful and chaste women. Often, my brave countrymen, often have the Danes breathed their last on our free plains—the might of our ancestors repeatedly vanquished their fiercest bands—nay, we ourselves have often torn the Danish raven from its proud height, and trampled it in the dust.

“ Our sovereign, the great, the good, the heroic Alfred, is on his march with the main army ; we have the honour to be his vanguard in the defence of our country, our friends, and our religion.—The danger is great, but the cause is glorious, and the renown is certain. Whether we be victorious or vanquished, our names will be dear to our countrymen. Is there a man in our ranks who would not offer himself a sacrifice to secure the freedom of England ?—Is there a Christian soldier here who would permit the idols of Denmark to be placed upon the altars of truth ? No : I see the presage of victory in your animated looks ; come

on then, my fellow-soldiers, let us march to defend our country."

This speech was received with one general acclamation from the ranks. The troops proceeded through the city, with banners displayed, and the animating sounds of martial music, which

"Touch'd with joy the bosoms of the brave."

As they marched along, many of the women appeared at the doors and windows, waving their handkerchiefs, but the majority sat retired, lamenting the dangers to which their dearest friends were exposed.

The English army left York about noon. As it was the middle of July, the weather was intensely hot, but the woody country, through which the troops passed, at once extended an umbrageous shelter from the sun, and screened them from the enemy.

In the afternoon a small party of cavalry, which had penetrated the woods, returned to inform Edwy, that the Danes were marching from Aldborough, and about six miles distant. He now advanced with caution, and, just as the sun was setting, the hostile Danish raven appeared on a distant hill, in ominous pomp, waving on the standards of the enemy.

Edwy formed his little army into three divisions: the archers, about one thousand strong, with their well-strung bows, their quivers full of arrows, and their short swords for encountering the foe hand to hand, occupied an eminence in the centre, and

were partly concealed by trees from the enemy ; the right division consisted of two thousand men, armed with spears, swords, and shields ; and the left division, consisting of the same number, were armed with the tremendous battle-axe and short daggers.

To this army of five thousand men, the Danes opposed a force of thirty thousand chosen warriors, who, flushed with victory, and excited to battle by their native ardour, and the hope of plunder, could hardly be prevented, by the approaching night, from an immediate attack.

Night in solemn and serene majesty overspread the face of nature, and for some hours concealed the hostile troops from each other. As the invaders were entirely ignorant of the number of the English army, they rested on their arms, every moment expecting to find their vanguard attacked.

Rufan, their general, knew that Alfred did not command the adverse host in person, since, from the intelligence communicated by his spies, he knew that the English hero was in London ; he was also informed of the wisdom and intrepidity of Edwy, his formidable opponent, but was ignorant of the number of men he commanded.

Edwy, on the other hand, had received information, by a few fugitives who escaped from the camp of the enemy, of their force and destination. He found that nothing less than the conquest of England was the object of the ambitious Rufan,

and he resolved to strain every nerve to stop his career.

With the first beams of morning light the martial horns and trumpets of the hostile armies summoned them to action. Edwy sustained the attack of the Danes with the firmness characteristic of valour. His archers, concealed by the trees, had time to take certain aim, and their arrows did terrible execution among the foe. The Danes rushed to the conflict with desperate courage, and with their swords and spears penetrated the English wings, and pressing onward, like a torrent, forced them to retire. At this critical moment the archers were in danger of being surrounded; but Edwy, with a band of battle-axe men, cut his way through the Danish ranks, collected his archers, and covered their retreat.

The Danes, unacquainted with the country, were soon lost amid the intricacies of the woody dells and hills, and were called from the pursuit by the trumpets of their general.

Rufan, elated with success, marched for York, compelling several of the English peasantry to join his ranks as he proceeded.

Meanwhile Edwy urged his defeated army to retreat to York, and defend that city till the arrival of Alfred. The battle in which he had been engaged lasted fourteen hours, and his troops were almost ready to faint with excessive fatigue and loss of blood, almost every man having received a wound! Their loss in slain was upwards

of one thousand men ; but the enemy, by the fatal skill of the archers, had lost treble that number.

The discomfited English army, screened by woods from the pursuing foe, retreated towards York, and pursued their former route. In the evening they halted at a village, and shared such refreshment as the place afforded. Instead of stopping there, during the night, Edwy urged his army to proceed, and save York from the enemy. Accordingly they proceeded through a forest, as quickly as the obstructions of the under-wood would permit, till night overtook them, about five miles from the city.

Darkness was rendered still more awful by a thunder-storm ; reiterated flashes of lightning, loud peals of thunder, and heavy showers of hail, impressed even the brave with a degree of terror.

The deep gloom which succeeded the tremendous glare of thunderbolts, occasioned such confusion among the troops, that they were bewildered, and, after wandering for some time at uncertainty, Edwy commanded them to halt, and seek the shelter of the trees from the storm.

Majestic oaks and elms afforded their dangerous protection to the warriors ; and Edwy, attended by several officers, rested beneath an oak, longing for the dawn. The storm increased, the electric clouds hovered over the wood, a flash of lightning, bursting from the congregated vapours, descended, and, striking the oak under which the general sat, shivered it from top to bottom, and struck him

speechless. His attendants, supposing him to be dead, surrounded the body, and joined in one universal lamentation. Edwy gradually revived, and, on recovering from his stupefaction, and recollecting the accident, exclaimed, "Alas! my fellow-soldiers, I fear the hand of heaven is against us. Even the storms of nature fight the battles of the enemy. The sins of our country are, I fear, about to be punished by the hands of relentless heathens, who are made instruments of justice against our errors. But, come, my brave comrades, I must not discourage you by my superstitious terrors: perhaps we may yet triumph. The dawn appears; let us march to protect York; and remember that, whatever may befall our country, it is our duty to die defending her liberties."

A bright summer's morning succeeded a short night of horrors, and the English army reached York before the Danes. Edwy immediately summoned every citizen who was able to bear arms, to repair to the standard of their country. The people, animated with ardour to repel the enemy, hastened at his call to join the ranks; old men and striplings wielded the sword and the spear; nay, several women offered to assist in opposing the ferocious foe, whose triumph they dreaded more than death itself.

York was unfortified, except the castle and two small forts; consequently, the principal dependence of Edwy was on the valour of his troops, and the succours hourly expected from Alfred. By his

directions, the women and children were removed to the monasteries and churches, defended by the castle ; he stationed his best troops in the two forts, and the undisciplined levy in the castle ; which, from its superior strength, afforded the best protection. He caused entrenchments to be made ; and, by these judicious arrangements, was prepared to resist the assault of the enemy.

About noon, Rufan, at the head of his victorious army, approached the intrenchments of the English. The Danes, with their usual intrepidity, leaped over the palisades, and were received on the points of the English pikes and swords, while the battle-axe men hewed numbers of them to pieces.

After a contest of four hours, in which every thing that valour could achieve was done by the besieged to repel the besiegers, the Danes were victorious, and took possession of the two forts and castle, putting the principal part of the garrison to the sword. Of six thousand Englishmen, including the armed citizens, the old men and boys, only five hundred were spared by the sanguinary conquerors. Edwy, and a few of his officers, survived the contest ; and, covered with honourable wounds, were dragged before Rufan.

Consternation and despair prevailed throughout the devoted city. The English flag was torn from the turrets of the castle, and the Danish standard hoisted in its stead. The beautiful and defenceless women, with their children, remained in the

convents and churches, imploring the protection of heaven. Rufan, from motives of policy, issued orders that their persons should remain inviolate ; but this apparent act of humanity was merely the dictate of cunning. He wished to bring over the people as he proceeded, to favour his views of the general subjugation of England ; and he knew that rapine and cruelty would only render the opposition to his army more tedious, formidable, nay, invincible.

Edwy, covered with his own blood, and that of the enemy, whom he had slain, was brought into the presence of his conqueror. A majestic gloom sat on the manly brow of the captive ; the Danish general felt respect for the dignified though unfortunate warrior ; and convinced of his uncommon military talents, offered him a high rank in the invading army, if he would join his banners. The English hero with a generous indignation which sparkled in his eyes, rejected the offer. “ No,” exclaimed he in the full tone of courage, “ though the fortune of war has made me your prisoner, neither menaces nor promises of aggrandizement shall induce me to relinquish my fealty to my king, and fidelity to my country.” “ Then you reject my friendly proposal, though you know that your life is in my power,” replied Rufan, in an imperious tone ; “ but recollect that you are a prisoner, and your lady, your beautiful Bertha, is also a captive. If your own life, and the honour of your consort, are dear, reflect before you rouse my

vengeance. On your determination depends her safety and your own."

This was the moment that tried the soul of Edwy. He bent his eyes towards the floor, and revolved in his mind his singular and calamitous situation. "Shall I become a traitor, consigned to eternal infamy, to preserve the honour of my Bertha? Oh my heart! though thou shouldest bleed, it must not be—shall I preserve this miserable, mangled form, at the price of my patriotism? forbid it, heaven! I will die, nay, Bertha herself, dear as she is, shall perish first."

After expressing this soliloquy in broken and tremulous accents, he turned his eyes towards heaven. Fortitude, like an invisible guardian angel, inspired his soul with generous confidence; he breathed a short ejaculation, and, while the Danish council looked steadfastly on him, he thus answered the impatient Rufan: "That you are my conqueror I cannot deny; these chains on my free-born limbs, and this guard that escorts me, with hostile and menacing gestures, too truly convince me of my situation; but, Rufan, chains belong not to the brave. Recollect, that a few short hours ago I was also invested with military power, and treat me with the respect becoming my rank; but even if you devote me to death, spare the innocent and virtuous wife of my bosom. If I have opposed you, as it was my duty to do, she has done you no injury—let me expire in torture, but be merciful to the daughter of a hero!

“ Her preservation depends entirely on your acquiescence to my terms,” replied the Dane, with a haughty air : “ if you become our auxiliary, your Bertha shall be secure from every harm.” “ I reject your terms,” cried Edwy : “ let me and all my connections be annihilated, rather than I should betray my country !” “ Take him to prison, away with him !” exclaimed the angry Dane ; “ let the dungeons of his own castle receive their lord in chains.”

Accordingly, Edwy was dragged to a dungeon, and chained to the floor, where only criminals had hitherto been confined. But his fortitude did not forsake him here ; though wounded, in darkness, in chains, and tortured with thirst and hunger, his mind was prepared to suffer all that man could endure. Anguish for the misfortunes that awaited Bertha, was his only intolerable woe.

He was conscious that he had acted with integrity ; nay, he even enjoyed a degree of pleasure amid his miseries, when he reflected on the glorious cause for which he suffered ; but the dangers to which Bertha was exposed, without his power of prevention, filled his soul with inexpressible horror.

Meanwhile the ladies of York, and the women of every rank, on being assured of the protection of Rufan, ventured to return to their habitations. Affectionate mothers were seen clasping their children in their arms ; blushing and trembling virgins passed through the martial ranks of the invaders, whose ferocity was repressed by their

general. On their return to their mansions, so lately the abode of social and innocent gaiety, the beautiful mourners, with a mixture of terror and sorrow, wept the untimely death of their friends slain in battle.

Bertha was distinguished from the other ladies by a peculiar dignity of demeanour and gracefulness, which commanded the respect of her enemies. She was now about two-and-twenty years of age, and in the full bloom of feminine beauty.

Rufan felt secret delight, on beholding the spouse of his illustrious and unsubmitting prisoner, and resolved to make her charms subservient to his projects of conquest, by engaging her to bring over her husband. A more gallant victor would himself have been enslaved by the lovely Bertha ; but ambition was the goddess of Rufan's adoration, and he sacrificed all his desires upon her altars.

Though Rufan could behold the beauteous captive without desire, he was convinced that so amiable a woman must possess great influence over the heart of a husband who had supplicated with such ardour for her preservation, at the very moment that he despised death himself. Rufan therefore resolved to engage the lady as an agent to persuade Edwy ; and with this intention he commanded her to be brought before him, where he sat in the pavilion of her own castle, in all the pride and presumption of recent victory.

When Bertha entered the pavilion, Rufan assumed the semblance of politeness, and rising of-

ferred a seat: “No,” said the lovely captive with modest dignity, “I cannot obey the conqueror of my husband, and share the comforts of society, while he is allowed to languish in ignominious chains.” “Lady,” replied the Dane, while the natural fierceness of his aspect was softened by a momentary smile of admiration, “it is in your power to liberate your lord.” “Ah! then he shall not long remain a prisoner!” “Go then, fair Bertha, persuade your husband to exert his influence, wisdom, and valour in our cause, and freedom, immunities, and honours, shall recompense his acquiescence.”

Bertha was thunderstruck. With downcast eyes she endeavoured to conceal the strong emotions of indignation, tenderness, and despair, that alternately agonized her bosom. A generous glow of enthusiasm, for a moment, illumined her beautiful cheek, but the vermeil tint of the rose vanished, and the pale hue of the lily evinced her agitation. Studious to conceal her sentiments, and desirous of an interview with her beloved husband; she, by an evasive answer, lulled the suspicions of Rufan. “Let me see my husband,” cried she, in an eager tone, “and I shall endeavour to persuade him to obtain a reward.” “Conduct the lady to the prisoner,” said the Dane, turning to his guards: “I shall be happy to receive him as an auxiliary. But hear me, lady, should Edwy continue obstinately hostile to my ambition—a torturous death—a public and ignominious

execution awaits him. He has now the choice of life and emolument, or an untimely grave—time is precious—I must soon proceed in my career of conquest ; and to-morrow, at noon, shall either restore Edwy to the dignity of military command, or seal his doom.” Bertha shuddered while she heard the cruel alternative ; deeply sighing she turned away, and hastily descended into the dungeon which contained her magnanimous husband.

She beheld the man of her choice disarmed, wounded, covered with clotted blood, and bound by heavy chains of rusty iron. Anguish, unutterable and excruciating, filled her soul as she gazed. The light of a small lamp which she held in her hand roused Edwy from sleep, and raising his ghastly eyes, he beheld his consort. He endeavoured to rise, but was prevented by Bertha, who, throwing herself into his arms, wept, while her sobs prevented utterance.

The brave captive pressed her to his bosom, and soothed her woe, exclaiming, “ My dearest Bertha, be comforted ! Do not increase my miseries by unavailing sorrow. I own that your presence, once the delight of my soul, now only reminds me of the glory from which I have fallen ; for, while your protector lies here, wounded and enchained, what misfortunes may not befall you without my power of prevention ?”—“ Husband of my heart,” replied the lady, “ though our misfortunes appear to you irremediable, I come, my love, empowered to liberate you from confinement, darkness, and

chains ; and to confer honours, wealth, and a restoration to my arms.”—“ Is this reality ? Is it my Bertha, or a celestial messenger, to console me ?” cried the astonished prisoner, till after a moment’s reflection, he added, with a mournful air, “ I am incredulous, Alfred cannot yet have arrived, and by what other hand than that of my generous sovereign can I be emancipated ?”—“ By the generosity of Rufan, by your conqueror, my Edwy,” replied Bertha, with earnestness, while her animated countenance, and the swelling tones of her voice declared the ardour of her mind—“ by a man who has hitherto treated me respectfully, and has sent me to unbind the fetters that encircle the limbs of my valiant consort.”—“ What motive can have softened the ferocity of a barbarous heathen, and induced him to act so generously ? What are the terms my Bertha, on which I can be restored to liberty and love ?”—“ A renunciation of your fealty to Alfred ; an alliance with the invader ; and the utmost exertion of your valour in the subjugation of your countrymen to the Danes.”

A deep and heart-rending groan of horror burst from the bosom of the captive—his nerveless arms sunk from embracing his consort—a profuse cold sweat overspread his frame, and rolled down his forehead—and the agony of his sufferings almost deprived him of reason. “ Is it then my own wife who comes to seduce a soldier from his duty—to add dishonour to defeat—and plunge in eternal infamy the man who has hitherto trod in the paths

of glory? Is it the daughter of Ethelwold, that honourable champion of freedom, who endeavours to persuade a captive to become a traitor?—No, Bertha, lovely as thou art, this must be our last interview. Leave me, I say—leave me to perish in my wounds—unwept and unattended; but leave me my honour—my patriotism—my virtue!”

The generous tears of enthusiasm bedewed the cheek of Bertha.—“No, my beloved lord,” she cried, “I come not to seduce you—I have only mentioned the proffer of Rufan—I did not urge you to accept it. Ah! I thought you knew me better, my dearest Edwy. The patriotism of my forefathers ever was renowned; and Ethelwold often fought the battles of his country. My sole motive of bearing this message from our conqueror was, that I might visit you. I find you magnanimous, and I come to share death with a husband, who is dearer to me, wounded and in honourable captivity, than when invested with authority and blooming in manly beauty. Death, in your present enfeebled state, will be like an opiate. The pain of your festering wounds will then be felt no more—and the arms of your Bertha shall be your pillow in the grave.”—“Heaven forbid that you should perish my love,” said Edwy, returning her embrace: “our sovereign will soon be here, and relieve his suffering countrymen from the oppression of the Danes. It will soothe my dying anguish, my dearest Bertha, to know that you will survive me—revere my memory—and vindicate my fame.”

A solemn but eloquent pause succeeded this dialogue. They gazed on each other with looks of unutterable tenderness and sorrow, and considering this as a last interview, embraced with an enthusiastic degree of affection, bordering on frenzy. A faint shriek escaped from the bosom of Bertha; but instantly recovering her fortitude, she endeavoured to mitigate the anguish of Edwy by concealing her own.

A Danish officer now entered, with a message from Ruffan, requiring the immediate attendance of Bertha. She arose with dignity, and Edwy said in the hearing of the officer, "Tell the general of the Danes, that I shall behave as becomes a captive warrior."

The unhappy lady went to the pavilion of Ruffan, who impatiently exclaimed, on her entrance, "Lady, you have been very tardy: has your husband accepted my liberal offer? May I consider him as an auxiliary?"—"My lord," replied she, with a noble air; "Edwy desired me to tell you, that he will behave as becomes a captive warrior." "Then he rejects my terms," said the fierce Dane, while his eyes sparkled with anger: "Go," said he, speaking to one of his officers: "tell the English general from me, that unless he joins our army, he shall be hanged to-morrow at noon---conduct this lady to an apartment, and let her visit her husband once more before he dies: perhaps she may yet prevail upon him to consult their mutual happiness."

Bertha retired to her chamber, and in solitude reflected on her misfortunes. It was now evening, and a few fleeting hours were to separate her for ever from the lord of her affections. She threw herself on a couch, and with tearful eyes, addressed the Deity in the language of supplication. A degree of serenity succeeded this act of devotion ; and a gentle slumber insensibly stole on her eyes, and closed the scene of her sorrow.

She awoke with the dawn ; and, starting up, hastily prepared for a last visit to her Edwy. Forgetful of every thing but the ignominious death that awaited her husband, she came to the desperate resolution of committing suicide rather than survive him : for this purpose she armed herself with a small dagger, which she concealed under her robe, and with a pale countenance, and eyes dim with weeping, she sat in expectation of being summoned to visit the prisoner.

During these affecting incidents at York, Alfred, with his characteristic promptitude and activity, dispatched couriers on swift horses, in all directions, to summon the barons and their dependants, to arms. The messengers proceeded through the different counties with the velocity of the wind ; and the alacrity with which the people armed themselves was wonderful.

Coventry was the head-quarters of Alfred, and thither he marched without delay, at the head of two thousand citizens of London.

The animation and ardour with which the levies rallied round the standard of their country was

unparalleled. The music of trumpets and horns vibrated in the air, and bands of youthful, courageous, and well-armed men, were seen approaching from all directions under their respective leaders. In that martial age, when military glory was considered so pre-eminently illustrious, the chieftains were emulous to outvie each other in the equipment of their troops. Their helmets were adorned with party-coloured plumes, and their banners embroidered with gold, insomuch that the army made a most formidable and splendid appearance. The archers were armed with well-strung bows, quivers full of arrows, helmets, cuirasses, and short swords; battle-axe men of athletic forms, bearing that tremendous weapon, and defended by helmets and thin coats of mail, appeared truly formidable in a firm phalanx; and Alfred's own band, armed with pikes, broad swords, helmets, and shields, were completely equipped for the plain.

On his arrival at Coventry, Alfred encamped near that town, and his army in two days was increased to upwards of thirty thousand men. Thus mustered in sufficient force to proceed against the enemy, the troops were drawn up, and reviewed by Alfred. They marched to the sound of flutes; on a signal being given they halted; their general rode along the lines, and spoke in the highest terms of approbation of their martial appearance.

Alfred was in the prime of manhood. He was tall, well-proportioned, agile, and graceful in all his motions; a skilful horseman, and dexterous

in the use of the lance, the sword and the bow. His countenance was open, animated, and expressive of intelligence and magnanimity. In his *human face divine* the characters of dignity, wisdom, and virtue, were strongly portrayed. His gracefulness charmed, while his solemn deportment awed, the beholder.

He had, in addition to the learning of the schools, attentively studied human nature. He knew how to regulate his own passions, and to command the passions of others; while all his knowledge was directed to its proper object—the promotion of universal happiness.

Mounted on a fiery charger, he took his station on a small eminence, in front of the lines, and thus, in a loud voice, harangued his soldiers:

“My brave compatriots in arms! our country again calls us to the field against lawless invaders. The enemies of our peace and happiness once more presume to contaminate our free soil with their footsteps, and we must either submit to their imperious dictates, and bend beneath their odious yoke, or drive them into that ocean which they have crossed for our annoyance.

“It gives me pleasure, my fellow-soldiers, to lead you into scenes of danger, where several of you must inevitably fall; there is not a man in your ranks whose life I would not risk my own to preserve, but dire necessity compels us to sacrifice a few for the good of the survivors. The survivors, did I say! nay, we are this day in arms to secure the happiness of millions yet unborn; and the

names of the heroes who die for their country will be eternized by fame, and dear to that posterity for whom they bled. Victory depends upon the will of heaven ; and conquest is often the companion of virtue. While my eyes explore your ranks, I can recognize the faces of many heroic chiefs, and hardy veterans, who have shared the dangers and the glories of a campaign with me before, and I feel confident that we shall be victorious in this contest. The urgency of circumstances may possibly prevent me from addressing you in the day of battle : let me now, therefore, advise you to keep your ranks in a firm and impenetrable phalanx. Let neither the assailing foe, nor your own ardour, prevail upon you to disperse. Discipline, united with valour like your's, is ever invincible. Be vigilant, collected, and determined. Act in concert like a vast body animated with one patriotic soul, and a new wreath of glory shall adorn your banners, while your country shall be freed from the menaces of enslavers.

“ Think on the achievements of your valiant forefathers ; the justice of your cause ; the liberty of your country, now in danger ; and the violation to which your laws, your altars, and your domestic happiness will be exposed, if you fly before the enemy.

“ One decisive victory, my brave countrymen, will crown us with glory, and establish our liberties : let us now, in the name of heaven, march to obtain it.”

Language would but feebly describe the enthusiasm with which the troops received this harangue. The circumambient hills and woods resounded the acclamations of the brave.—“Lead us to the foe, Alfred, lead us to the foe,” was the universal exclamation from the ranks. The king, animated with congenial ardour, drew his sword, and waving it, the trumpets sounded, the banners were displayed, and the army proceeded in full march against the Danes.

A rapid march of two days brought the English army in sight of York, and the van-guard beheld, with indignation, the Danish standard waving on the loftiest tower of that city. Incited by a desire of vengeance, the troops expressed their wish to be led immediately against the enemy; but their prudent general commanded them to encamp, take refreshments, fix their sentinels, and repose till morning; when they should be invigorated, and fit for action.

The English army arrived in the vicinity of York on the evening previous to that appointed for the execution of Edwy; and early next morning the out-posts of the Danes, to their great surprise, beheld hostile banners waving on the adjacent hills.

An instantaneous alarm was spread throughout the Danish host: Rufan drew up his battalions in array, and boldly awaited the attack of the English, whose trumpets now sounded a charge, while Alfred led the van, animating his troops by his voice and example.

The English charged the Danes with such impetuosity and valour, that they were unable to sustain the shock ; their ranks were broken, and their consecrated standard of the raven taken. Rallied by the intrepid Rufan, they assailed the English with desperate courage ; but a contest of six hours left Alfred and his host victorious.

Rufan, with all his principal officers, and eight thousand men, were slain ; and the residue of the discomfited Danes dispersed in the woods, where numbers of them died of their wounds.

Alfred, at the head of his army, entered York in triumph, and was met by the inhabitants with gratulatory acclamations. One of Edwy's officers, who knew the sentence of Rufan, hastened to meet the conqueror. He told him of the imminent danger of the captive : " Ah ! my liege," cried he, " hasten and preserve the life of my brave but unfortunate general : perhaps he is at this moment strangled by the cord of the executioner." " Heaven forbid !" replied Alfred : " conduct me instantly to his prison, that I may myself have the pleasure of setting him free."

Meanwhile, unconscious of an event so glorious to the arms and propitious to the freedom of England, the disconsolate Bertha revisited her lord. She was permitted to pass by the soldiers who guarded the entrance of the dungeon, and approached Edwy silently and alone.

She found him on his knees, absorbed in pious meditation—her light footsteps were unheard by

the captive—she stopped at the entrance of the cell, unwilling to interrupt him, and while she leaned against the damp wall, Edwy gave expression to his feelings in the following soliloquy :

“ A few fleeting moments, and Edwy is no more! Oh my CREATOR! I bow with resignation to thy divine will—the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Thou hast in thy good pleasure conferred upon me strength and valour. In thy hands I have been instrumental to the defence of my country, and it has been thy will that I should finally be conquered, and put to death by the enemy. Yet still a more valiant champion remains to preserve the freedom of England. Bless, O prosper the arms of Alfred—let victory sit on his helm, and glory adorn his banners. One supplication more, O MERCIFUL BEING, and I have done with life. Preserve my Bertha from violation—grant her fortitude to bear my death with resignation, and shield her by thy divine providence from harm.”

A shriek from Bertha interrupted her pious husband—she rushed forward, and throwing herself on her knees beside him, raised her hands and eyes towards heaven in speechless agony. The feeble glimmer of a small lamp enabled the prisoner to recognize his consort. “ Bertha!” he exclaimed, “ thou beloved of my soul, why dost thou come to unman me at my final hour? Retire, retire my love, and pray for the departing spirit of thy husband.” “ Ah! Edwy,” cried the

weeping lady, embracing him, “dost thou think I can forsake thee now? no, my honourable, my noble husband, I come to share death with thee. It is enviable to die with a patriotic hero. Woman has seldom had the honour to make so glorious an exit. Let me then leave a memorial, that my sex can both admire and imitate heroic virtue.”

“No, my beauteous and too tender-Bertha, rather live to cherish the memory of a patriot, who despised life and its richest enjoyments, when put in competition with his country’s weal—nay, who resigned, though not without a pang, the enchanting smiles of his consort’s beauty—the soft blandishments of connubial love—and preferred the dark grave to the bed of chaste wedlock, when his duty demanded the sacrifice.”

Bertha gazed on her husband with eyes glistening with admiration. She beheld his pale countenance during his speech resume its wonted animation and his heroic eyes beam with magnanimity, and she continued silent and irresolute.

At this interesting moment a Danish officer entered, to inform the captive that the apparatus for his execution was ready—the morning far advanced. There were marks of perturbation strongly impressed on the countenance of this messenger, which escaped the observation of Edwy and his unhappy Bertha, whose minds were wholly occupied by the idea of their own misery.

“I shall be ready in a short time,” said Edwy: “permit me to pass that time with my wife.” The officer retired.

A momentary and lethargic calm seemed to prevail in the mind of Bertha ; but it was rather a suspension of her faculties than an effort of fortitude. Like the gloom of a thunder-cloud, her silence was broken by a terrible explosion of passion. Her head grew giddy—frenzy seized her brain ; and the demon of suicide suggested that crime as the only means of escaping a public execution.

The faint light of the lamp enabled Edwy to observe the wildness of her aspect. He endeavoured to soothe her mind, and entreated her to leave the prison, and return to her apartment. “ Alfred, my venerated sovereign, will protect my Bertha,” cried the patient hero ; “ he is this moment on his march, and perhaps will ere tomorrow be master of York, and restore you to liberty.”

Bertha clung to his neck, and with sobs of agonizing woe, exclaimed “ My beloved lord, whom I chose in preference to all that sought my hand, do you think I can leave you in the hour of extremity ! I have shared the delights of love with you, and shall I not also participate your sorrows and your pains ? Endeared as you are by our former joys, and still more noble and amiable in misfortune, do you then think, my Edwy, I can survive you ? ” “ What means my Bertha ? ” exclaimed the captive, with a look of astonishment : “ I shall explain my purpose,” replied the fair sufferer, while the tremor of horror agitated her

frame ; “ this world, without you, would be a gloomy scene ; but I have an expedient in reserve that shall prevent me from suffering a life of widowhood, and save my honourable lord from the ignominious death to which he is doomed by his ferocious conqueror. My husband must not be a spectacle for multitudes to gaze on. You shall not die like a base criminal—a nobler mode of death shall preserve you from the polluted hands of the executioner.”

Edwy imagined that madness had taken possession of the mind of his consort ; he embraced her, and besought her to retire. “ No,” cried she, with an indignant air, “ rather let us imitate the heroes of Greece and Rome, who thought it magnanimous to snatch the dagger from the hand of oppression, and die gloriously.”

“ Oh, Bertha ! cried the afflicted Edwy, in a tone of sorrow, “ though heathenism may justify suicide, revelation forbids the crime of murder ; and what species of murder is so horrible and unnatural as self-destruction ? Ah, my love ! why would you plunge us both in perdition ? It is not disgraceful—nay, it is glorious—to be put to death by an enemy, rather than become perfidious.—Adieu, beloved of my soul !—go ; and with repentant tears, supplicate the Deity to pardon this horrid resolution.”

While Edwy thus spent the few minutes that were allowed to him of life in pious endeavours to animate the fortitude and resignation of his

wife, and while she hung fondly on his shoulder in a state of speechless sorrow, the victorious Alfred entered York. The joyful inhabitants hailed their deliverer with reiterated acclamations. Those sounds of triumph reached the ears of Edwy and Bertha. The fair unfortunate imagined the noise was occasioned by the ferocious Danes, rejoicing at the approaching death of her husband—she started up, and, drawing her dagger, exclaimed, “By the valiant spirit of Ethelwold, my father—by the unstained honour of my family, my Edwy shall never be a gazing stock for his brutal enemies! Prepare your heart,” cried she, presenting the point of the weapon, as she stood over the enchained captive; “make haste, my love, or our foes will prevent my generous purpose—are you ready, Edwy?—speak!”—

She concluded her speech in a tone of despair; and raising her arm to plunge the fatal point in his heart—love prevented her—she stepped back, and, gazing on him with a look of inexpressible fondness—“Alas!” cried she, “I cannot wound the bosom I love so well. Behold me, then, my Edwy, and imitate your spouse, who thus freely sacrifices her life rather than survive thee—Adieu, my love! for thy sake I strike this blow—for thee I freely die!——

Just as she raised the dagger, Edwy, by a sudden spring to the extent of his chain, reached and arrested her arm. Overcome by surprise, and the conflict of different passions, she instantly fainted away.

While the unhappy captive in vain, endeavoured to restore her to life, he heard the sound of trumpets ; and the next moment a sudden splendour gleamed along the dreary passage that led to his dungeon. He looked towards the entrance in hopes of the approach of some human being, who might assist him to revive his lady. The light increased : and the victorious Alfred, preceded by two torch-bearers, and attended by his officers, entered the cell.

Edwy expressed his surprise by a shout of joy. The benign sovereign and his attendants hastily advanced. There was no occasion for an orator to expatiate on the suffering of the captive and his spouse—Nature eloquently pleaded their cause, and the tears of sympathy filled the eyes of Alfred ; who, brave, humane, and pious, felt as a man.

The chains were knocked off the limbs of Edwy ; and when the officers raised Bertha to convey her to the open air, she revived. She called on Edwy : he supported her, and softly whispered the happy change, from captivity and danger to freedom and security.

This intelligence was fatal to Bertha.^v The sudden transition, from the extreme of woe to excessive joy, was too much for nature to sustain. Feebly pressing her loved lord to her bosom, she cried, “ Adieu, my husband ! this burst of joy has triumphed over life—I expire with rapture—Oh, heaven ! forgive my rash intent to destroy myself : it was the voice of misguided honour that suggested

that expedient—I feel some consolation that I am to be removed by a milder visitant. Joy, that cordial of life, is to me the minister of death. May my Edwy live long an ornament and defender of his country.”

With these words on her lips, the young, the beautiful, and the affectionate Bertha, expired in the arms of that husband who was dearer to her than life.

The body was hastily carried into the open air, and the most skilful surgeons of the army attended, by whom all the means of reanimation that wisdom could devise, were tried in vain. But the free spirit had ascended to that heaven from whence it came, leaving the frail and beautiful palace of mortality of which it had been an honourable inhabitant, to the dissolution which awaits every elemental form.



THE

PLEASURES OF SYMPATHY.

IN a valley near the verge of the river Calder, at the distance of three miles from Leeds, in Yorkshire, stands the mansion of Mr. Howell, a respectable manufacturer of broad-cloth. The manufactory is a large building, situated at the rear of the dwelling-house; a small garden adorns the front, and the gothic ruins of Kirkstall Abbey rising amid groves at the distance of half a mile terminate a picturesque prospect, while the incessant flow of the river, as it glides smoothly within its verdant banks, and the appearances on the highway of carriages and passengers on foot, enliven the scene.

But among the interesting objects which adorn this pleasant spot, Eliza, the eldest daughter of Mr. Howell, has long been its most celebrated ornament. Accustomed from her infant years to the gentlest treatment from her affectionate parents, the natural tenderness of her disposition was cherished by domestic happiness; the beautiful scenes around her formed her taste to the perception and enjoyment of rural charms, and the pre-

cepts of parental instruction taught her the grateful adoration due to the Sovereign of Nature. Eliza was beloved by her father's servants; the manufacturers were unanimous in their praise of a girl who was ever the first to solicit her parents in behalf of the unfortunate, the diseased, or whoever laboured under any of the remediable evils of life. If money was wanted for any particular emergency, Miss Eliza was the advocate, and her eloquence prevailed. In no instance was she unsuccessful, except when her unsuspecting innocence was so far imposed upon that she even requested money for a drunken and idle workman; this request her father refused, assuring her that the present object of her attention was a worthless being, who squandered his wages in the alehouse while his family wanted common necessities. For such a person Eliza could feel no sympathy; nay, a slight aversion towards him arose in her mind, but it was like a summer cloud passing between the sun and the earth; her natural humanity predominated, and she hastened to relieve the wife and children of even an idle manufacturer. "If the man is so foolish and wicked," said Eliza, "as to neglect his family, they are still more pitiable, and ought not to suffer for his imprudence or his crimes." Such were the humane sentiments of this amiable girl, who now in the fifteenth year of her age, was admired and respected by her acquaintance, for the strength of her understanding and the goodness of her heart.

The benevolence of Eliza was not of that spurious species which requires the approbation of others to rouse it into full exertion ; her kindness to her fellow-creatures was the spontaneous sentiment of a sympathetic heart so happily organized, that its youthful possessor as it were instinctively obeyed the social precept,

“ Rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep.”

Endowed with good sense, Eliza seldom suffered her feelings to be agitated by fictitious tales of woe. Not that she was insensible to the charms of poetry or the powers of pathetic description, but as she justly observed, “ there are real evils enough in the world for the exercise of our humanity and the excitement of our pity, without our indulging in the painful emotions which are too often felt for fictitious misery. Let us first as far as we can mitigate the pain of the sick, relieve the wants of the indigent, and exhort the vicious to reformation. When disengaged from these indispensable duties, we may sympathize with imaginary joy or woe ; gratify our feelings with the beautiful parting of Hector and Andromache, so exquisitely described by the poet ; weep with Corporal Trim and young Le Fevre over the remains of an unfortunate soldier ; or sympathize with Old Edwards when he discovers that his only son is no more.

While Eliza contributed as far as she could to the happiness of her father’s dependants, and her indigent though industrious neighbours, she was also attentive to the relative duties of a daughter

and a sister. Her affectionate heart was harmonized by virtue to those reciprocal acts of kindness which constitute social happiness. Obedient to her parents, she was also affectionate to two brothers and two sisters, and being as the eldest child invested with a certain degree of authority, which empowered her to regulate their actions, she often prevented her brothers from committing wanton acts of cruelty in their pursuit of the inferior animals. Many an insect and many a bird did Eliza rescue from the destructive levity of her brothers: and often did she inculcate humanity, by repeating in the presence of her brothers and sisters, the following sentiments of Cowper :

“ I would not enter on my list of friends,
 Though grac'd with polish'd manners and fine sense,
 (Yet wanting sensibility) the man
 Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
 An inadvertent step may crush the snail
 Which crawls at evening in the public path,
 But he that hath humanity, forewarn'd,
 Will tread aside, and let the reptile live!”

An accident afforded Eliza an opportunity for the full exercise of her benign affections. One fine autumnal afternoon, while the reapers were busied in cutting down a plentiful crop, Eliza ascended the hill near Kirkstall Abbey, and proceeded along the public road to visit a friend at an adjoining village. As she turned into a pathway which led to the residence of her friend, her attention was engaged by the appearance of a woman and child sitting under a tree in the field. Eliza like other young people was curious, but

her curiosity was laudable ; and instead of being gratified by tales of scandal or invectives against the real or imaginary faults of others, she was inquisitive respecting objects of utility, such as discoveries in the useful arts, geographical descriptions, or if desirous to know the history of her neighbours, it was for the purpose of approving their virtues or pitying their errors and misfortunes.

The appearance of a woman and child in a solitary, and perhaps destitute state, now impelled Eliza, by an irresistible curiosity and sympathy, towards those interesting objects ; but as her delicacy forbade intrusion, except she found that she could be useful, she approached the stranger silently, and concealed by underwood. She stopped within a few yards of the tree, and listening heard the child exclaim, “ I want a cake mother ! I am hungry and dry, I want a cake.”—“ My dear boy,” replied the mother in a faint voice, “ let me rest a little while, I am tired Harry, you will let your poor mother rest.”—“ Yes, I will,” replied the child, “ and I’ll kiss you too to make you happy.”—“ Ah ! my innocent darling,” cried the woman in a tone of anguish, “ you little know what you say, your mother will never be happy again ; he is gone who could make me happy.” Eliza could hear no more, the precious drops of sympathy filled her eyes, and softly retiring, she returned to the path, and then crossed the field in view of the stranger as if by accident. The woman saw her, and endeavoured to conceal herself, but

Eliza approaching with a modest air, enquired why she had chosen that solitary spot. "I was tired, Miss," replied the woman, "after a long day's journey, during which I was obliged to carry this boy." Eliza now examined the stranger with increasing sympathy. She was a young woman, and notwithstanding the discolouration occasioned by the sun and dust, she was pretty; her countenance was overspread with langour and melancholy, and she sighed deeply as she slowly arose from her mossy seat. The boy looked earnestly at Eliza, and then whispered to his mother, who smiled: "What did he say?"—"He said that may be the lady would give him a cake."—"Well, he shall have a cake presently. But why do you travel on foot without a protector?"—"Ah! Miss, I have no protector in this world but God Almighty; I am a soldier's widow."—"A soldier's widow!" exclaimed Eliza with emotion. "Yes, indeed Miss, my husband was killed in Spain at the battle of Talavera."—"Poor woman," said Eliza, in accents of compassion, "you have experienced much sorrow and misfortune."—"Sure enough I have: my story is a sad one."—"I wish much to hear it," said Miss Howell, "but you seem much fatigued, let me conduct you to some place where you can get refreshment." The woman gazed on Eliza with surprize; the voice of friendship and humanity was new to her ears, and the tears rose to her eyes as she replied, "Let me try if I can first relate my story."—"No, no,

my good woman, you must first get refreshments; come with me, I shall carry your son, for you seem quite tired." Then promising the child a cake, she with angelic benignity condescended to carry him in her arms to the house of her friend, which was distant about a quarter of a mile.

When Eliza entered the abode of friendship, she presented the boy saying, "I have brought two unexpected visitors to my dear Maria."—"They are welcome for your sake," replied the farmer's daughter. "And for the sake of humanity," cried Eliza. "Yes, my romantic friend, that makes them doubly welcome." The widow and her son were now regaled with tea, the cheering effect of which was perceptible in the innocent playfulness of the child, who, though not well clad, was a fine thriving boy about three years of age. His mother continued pensive; but the kind attention of Eliza gradually cheered her, especially when she was told in a whisper that she had found a friend. Both the young ladies were extremely anxious to hear the stranger's history, and with deep sighs she began the following narrative:

"I am a native of Ireland, and was born near Belfast, the principal northern town of that island. In my eighteenth year I married Henry Heslop, who was by trade a linen-weaver. Soon after our marriage he was without employment, trade was so bad; and a recruiting party coming to Belfast, he enlisted in an Irish regiment of infantry. I had always been used to a quiet country life, and did

not like rambling ; but I resolved not to forsake my husband. In a short time he was promoted to the rank of serjeant of grenadiers ; and though I say it, he was one of the handsomest men in the army. Well, the regiment was ordered on foreign service, and I as a particular favor was permitted to go with my husband. We were sent to Portugal, where this little boy was born, and christened by our chaplain by the name of Henry, after his father. We continued in Portugal a long time, lived on very indifferent fare, but I was with my husband, and should have preferred a crust in a cottage with him to the richest palace without him. At last General Sir Arthur Wellesley took the command, and the British army marched into Spain. After manœuvring, as they call it, for several months, the two armies met at Talavera ——.” Here the recollection of her loss so completely over powered the narrator that she was unable to utter a word ; but clasping her little boy in her arms, she bent forward, and mournfully moving her head, abundance of tears afforded a momentary relief. The two friends were affected but continued silent, and the stranger after an effort resumed her story—

“ On the morning of the day that a battle was expected, Henry carried the boy in his arms, and conducted us to the entrance of a wood. ‘ My dear wife,’ said he, ‘ you have been a faithful companion ; from the appearance of things we may expect a battle to-day or to-morrow, and as

your safety is dearer to me than life—and our son is equally dear—I think it best for you to remove to a village about two miles in our rear, till we know the event of the engagement. For my own part, I have no doubt of our success, my love,’ continued he, observing my tears flow, ‘do not grieve, my dearest Kitty, but pray for our victory over the disturbers of Europe. We are commanded by an Irishman, and a brave one, and though distant from my native land, had I a thousand lives I would cheerfully venture them for the glory and honour of old Ireland.’ While he spoke, his countenance appeared fresh, and his eyes sparkled, but on looking down on his son, whom he still held in his arms, he suddenly turned pale—the tears filled his eyes, he endeavoured to conceal them by turning away, but overcome by my sobs and tears, he mingled the parting drops of sorrowful love with mine. I promised to take his advice, and we continued together unwilling to part till the bugle-horn summoned him to join the ranks. He then clasped me in his arms, embraced our child, which he resigned to my care, and with hasty steps returned to the camp. I sunk down on the grass, and thought I should have died, till rousing myself and fearing the approaching danger, I hastened to the village, where I found several soldiers’ wives and sutlers with their carts and panniers.

“The battle began in the afternoon, and the noise of the cannon made the ground tremble

under our feet. It would be hard to describe my sorrow and that of my companions during this terrible battle, which continued all the following night and the next day, till late in the afternoon. The news of victory at length reached our ears, and we hastened to the army like wild creatures to inquire about our husbands. With some difficulty I found our regiment, and was shocked at the small number that was left. I gazed with anxiety—but I looked in vain: for Henry was not there——”——“Ah! say no more,” exclaimed the compassionate Eliza, “you have told enough.” But she might have spared herself the request, for the narrator was unable to speak; her unavailing tears were shed to the memory of the dead—while the remains of the brave and the beloved lay interred in a foreign plain.

“You can tell us the sequel of your story another time,” said Maria; “you see you have made my friend weep.”—Ah! bless her dear compassionate soul,” exclaimed the widow, “I have little more to say, ladies, and do not wish to feel the pain of relating it again, I may as well finish it now.”—Eliza bowed her head in acquiescence.

“On enquiry I found that Henry was among the wounded or the killed; I was informed where the regiment had been principally engaged, and passed through such shocking scenes that my heart yet recoils with horror at the remembrance. After a search of some time, just as the sun was setting, I discovered my dear soldier. He was alive, but

mortally wounded ; and much as he had suffered from pain, he instantly knew me. He beckoned, and I approached with tottering steps. I sunk down on my knees beside him, and my falling tears were mingled with his life-blood. Our son, terrified at the shocking place, cried, nor could I pacify him ; indeed my mind was so overcome with sorrow, that I scarcely knew what I said or did. ‘ My kind and affectionate wife,’ said the dying man in a low voice, ‘ why did you come hither ? pray for me, my love, and may the great Protector of the fatherless and the widow hear the prayer of a dying soldier, and preserve you from every evil.’ While he spoke his eyes were turned towards heaven : he gave a deep sigh, and his cold hand, which was clasped in mine—dropped lifeless—he was gone—and, forgetful of my child, I sunk fainting on the dead body. On my recovery I found myself supported by two soldiers of our regiment : another held my son in his arms. They hurried me from the field of battle to a tent, where wine was offered to me. But although I carefully fed my child, I could scarcely take any nourishment. When the British army retired towards Portugal, I went with them, and was sent to Lisbon, and thence in a transport to Portsmouth. As there was no provision for me, and I had no friend, I set out on foot on my return to Ireland. I travelled till I wore out my shoes, and continued my journey barefoot ; my money also began to fail, and I have yet a long journey before

me before I can see my friends.”—“ You have one friend here,” said Eliza, wiping her eyes, “ I will be your friend, Mrs. Heslop and I will take care of your son too :” with these words she kissed the little boy, and requesting Maria to take care of the strangers till the next day, she returned home, related the simple tale, and obtained her father’s permission to become the protectress of the soldier’s widow and orphan.

Next morning Eliza returned with alacrity to the residence of her friend, conducted the unfortunate mother and child to her paternal mansion, obtained employment for the woman in her father’s manufactory, clothed little Harry, and took him under her immediate protection ; and the sweetest employment of her leisure hours, is to instruct the good-natured infant in the elements of knowledge. Harry loves his preceptress ; and his mother, with grateful emotions, is thankful to God for the happy accident by which she met so beneficent a friend.

Eliza Howell continues in the habitual practice of that charity which constitutes one of the principal duties as it is also the chief source of happiness to the benevolent heart ; and her experience fully justifies the social utility and the reciprocal pleasures communicated by sympathetic benevolence.

THE
MISERIES OF SEDUCTION.*

WERE you, ye fair, but cautious whom ye trust,
Did you but know how seldom fools are just :
So many of your sex would not in vain
Of broken vows, and faithless men, complain.

ROWE.

MARY FENTON was the eldest daughter of an industrious villager, at Dunson, in Oxfordshire ; she was a lively girl, with a pretty face and well-proportioned form ; nor could an exposure to the weather in the harvest-field diminish the attractions of this pleasing village-maid. In this state of obscure but blameless poverty, Mary attained her nineteenth year, and was universally allowed by her rustic neighbours to be one of the prettiest girls in the county, and remarkable for modesty and agreeable manners. She had been taught to read and write at a Sunday School, and was perfectly contented with her humble situation, when a letter from a female friend, who had adventured to London, first interrupted the serenity of Mary. The friend was employed as housemaid in a noble-

* This Tale has also been PIRATED by a Publisher in London.

man's family ; she had heard of a place for Mary, and invited her to share the delights of servitude in terms of rapturous eulogium.

Incited by that curiosity so strong in the youthful mind, Mary, with the concurrence of her parents, who were very poor, prepared for her journey ; and after bestowing the kiss of friendship on each of her three sisters, she left home. With a bosom throbbing with the pleasurable emotions of hope she set out on her journey, and arrived in the capital in health and good spirits.

She was received by her friend with unaffected joy, and on application to a lady in Baker-street, who wanted a nursery-maid, she was hired, and entered upon her arduous employment without delay. Mary, though unacquainted with the cares of the nursery, soon became a proficient in the management of children. She was in possession of those indispensable requisites, good health, a cheerful temper, and a tender heart : the two children entrusted to her care soon became strongly attached to her, and the first year which she spent in Baker-street was a year of happiness. Her wages and the liberal presents which she received from the visitors amounted to about twenty pounds ; one half of which she sent to her indigent parents, and the residue was laid out in requisite clothing.

Mary was now a pretty nursery-maid ; her rusticity gradually gave place to more graceful manners, and her behaviour was irreproachably decent.

But the hour approached in which the happiness of this amiable girl was to be sacrificed to the caprice of a superior ; and her pure heart, unsuspecting of evil, was soon to receive the contaminating taint of depravity. The Hon. Capt. L*** became a resident in Baker-street. He was the only brother of Mary's mistress ; and having acquired a fortune in India, came home to spend it in England. Soon after his arrival, he took a fancy to the pretty nursery-maid ; and unaccustomed to the restraint of his capricious desires, he resolved to violate the laws of hospitality and honour, by the seduction of virgin innocence. Finding Mary unmoved by his unmeaning flattery and polite assiduity, he proceeded to address her with all the apparent ardour of a sincere lover. The vanity of the nursery-maid was gratified by the attention of a gentleman, who swore he loved her, and would marry her ; she believed his protestations, and was seduced from the path of discretion.

For some months the unhappy dupe of falsehood lived in daily expectation that her lover would realize that promise of a private marriage, which he so repeatedly swore he would perform. Her situation now became extremely critical—she was far advanced in pregnancy, and dreaded the exposure of her imprudence. To add to her affliction, the captain went to pass the summer at Brighton. He gave her a kiss, and presented her with five guineas, at parting—but she never

saw him again. Like most men of pleasure, the captain was totally callous to all the finer emotions of the heart; and when Mary pressed his hand, while her bosom was convulsed with sobs, and her eyes overflowed with the honest tears of true-love, he turned from her with a fashionable shrug, and humming an Italian air as he walked down stairs, mounted his horse and rode off, without bestowing another thought on his abandoned victim.

The pregnancy of Mary now became so visible, that the scandalous circumstance was whispered among her fellow-servants, and soon communicated to her mistress. Mary was interrogated by the lady, who felt her honourable pride alarmed at the idea of permitting an abandoned girl to sleep under the same roof. The poor dupe of deception confessed the truth; but the perfidy of the captain was so far from exciting indignation against him, and pity for Mary, that his sister instantly turned her out of doors!

It was now six o'clock in the evening, and Mary—the poor out-cast Mary—went, with a face covered with blushes, to recount her errors and misfortunes to that friend who had tempted her from innocent rusticity to vicious refinement. Her friend received her with apparent cordiality, expressed her concern on finding she was out of place; but on hearing the particulars of her disgrace, she started up, and stood at a distance from the unfortunate girl, as if she dreaded infection. When her surprise abated, she requested Mary to

go with her to the house of an acquaintance in her neighbourhood—there she left her, with a promise to call in the morning, but with a secret resolution never more to hold any intercourse with a dishonoured woman.

Next morning, Mary waited for some time in expectation of a visit from her friend—but no friend came—Mary had not a friend in the world. She then wrote a letter to her former companion, and received a laconic answer, informing her, that in consequence of what had happened in Baker-street, the correspondence must terminate, for the loss of character was an irremediable evil. With a heart almost bursting with mournful and indignant emotions, the abandoned Mary began her solitary journey to her natal village. Her parents she thought would not reject her ; and this consolatory reflection enabled her to travel on foot nearly seventy miles, exposed to the heat of summer.

On her arrival at the cottage, which had been the former scene of her blameless youthful joys, Mary shed tears ; she found her parents both living, but her father was confined to bed by a severe indisposition, which was not mitigated by the misfortunes of his child. Mary, however, received no reproaches ; she was welcomed back with the cordiality of parental affection ; and having brought about twenty pounds with her, she obtained medical aid, which gradually restored her father to his usual health.

Two months after her arrival, Mary was delivered of a son ; and the requisite accommodations diminished her purse, insomuch, that in a short time she found herself pennyless. Her parents were unable to afford her any relief, except a share of their humble fare, and the shelter of their cottage : she made several applications to those farmers' wives in the neighbourhood, who wanted a nurse, but none of them would admit her under their roof. In this distress Mary applied to the parish-officers for relief, but her bastard had no claim on them—it must be sent to the parish of *St. Mary-le-bone*. Destitute and almost despairing, Mary was necessitated to wander as a mendicant through the villages of Oxfordshire. Her beautiful aspect, pale with woe, and frequently bedewed with tears, excited the pity of the compassionate, who relieved her immediate wants ; but her misfortunes too often served as a subject for the gross and licentious wit of unfeeling rustics. Adversity preyed on the spirits of Mary, but with her sufferings, her love of virtue returned. Indeed she had never been vicious—she was deceived—not corrupted ; and this reflection proved consolatory, amid the surrounding calamities of want and infamy. The little boy too, proved a fine thriving child ; accustomed to continual changes of air, he daily grew stronger and more lively, and his fond mother often with tearful eyes bent over him, and kissed that smiling companion, who was unconscious that his existence had been the cause of a mother's misery.

Half-a-year passed away, and the vagrant mother and child were unprovided for—no benign hand opened an asylum to shelter them from the wintry air. The clothing of Mary was insufficient to afford necessary warmth to herself and her infant, and she exposed a frame naturally delicate to the chilling atmosphere, while she wrapped a tattered silken cloak about her son, and cherished him at her *yet warm* bosom. In her wandering, during a gloomy afternoon in December, she beheld a village on a distant hill. She bent her steps towards it, but spiritless and exhausted, a sudden faintness compelled her to stop at the entrance of a lane. The shades of a winter's evening closed fast around her—she was hungry, cold, and destitute—but she was not alone ; ah, no ! a helpless infant was her companion. Thus abandoned as an out-cast in a civilized nation which so loudly boasts of its humanity, the sad victim of a villain's arts, was left to perish, “ with not a friend to close her eyes.” Yet although abandoned by mankind, she was not forsaken by celestial mercy ; the consciousness that she was unfortunate but not criminal, blunted the arrows of death. While sensibility remained, she performed the duties of a good mother. She pressed her infant to that bosom which was chilled by the blasts of night ; she supplied him with milky nutriment, and folded the son of her youth in a last embrace. Tears of maternal love dropped from the eyes of the dying mother on the beloved face which she was never more to

behold—she uttered a plaintive prayer to the FATHER of the fatherless, beseeching his protection to her son—then clasping the infant more closely in her arms, she laid her head on a mossy bank, and closed her eyes for ever on sublunary scenes.

In this state her corpse was found about dawn by a waggoner, who happening to stop his horses on the road adjacent to the spot where Mary lay, was alarmed by the feeble cry of an infant. He discovered the child, endeavouring to suck the breast of the unhappy mother—but that fountain was for ever dried up. The honest rustic wept over this mournful scene; he conveyed the child to a secure asylum, and the remains of poor Mary were interred in the village church-yard.



THE ELOPEMENT:

OR,

THE IMPRUDENT CONNECTION.

SIXTH EDITION.

IN the summer of 1802, a middle-aged man engaged lodgings at a farm-house in the vicinity of Bath. His appearance was remarkably genteel, and his person handsome; but there was a deep melancholy diffused over his features. In his intercourse with the farmer and his family, he evinced the greatest mildness of manners, and his mode of living was according to the strictest precepts of temperance. He lived in the greatest privacy, saw no company, but amused himself with short excursions, books, and his pen.

The ravages of grief, however, some weeks after his arrival, laid him on his death-bed, and a few minutes before he expired, he requested Mr. Hutchinson, the farmer, to enclose some papers which lay in a drawer, and direct them to Mr. Vernon, Guildford-street, London. He then expressed a wish to be privately interred, and desired the farmer to use his purse, to defray the expence of the funeral.

Soon after the interment of this stranger, farmer Hutchinson folded up the papers with an intention to send them to London by the Bath coach. Mrs. Hutchinson being naturally very curious, entreated her husband to communicate the contents; and the deceased not having prohibited the indulgence of curiosity, the farmer consented.

Accordingly he unfolded the manuscript, and read the following narrative:

THE ADVENTURES OF HENRY AND MARIA.

IN this pleasing retirement, so completely detached from the scenes of busy life, I shall now endeavour to soothe the anguish of my soul by a retrospection of those events which led to an unfortunate attachment, that so long embittered my existence.

My father, Thomas Aston, was a tradesman, who, by attention to business, saved about five thousand pounds, which he placed in the funds. My mother dying in my infancy, I was sent to a boarding-school, and in my sixteenth year my father, who was desirous that I should be brought up to the church, sent me to the University of Cambridge. On the death of my dear and affectionate father, which happened in a few months after I

was sent to college, I was entrusted to a guardian, with an injunction that I should finish my studies with divinity.

During six years study, I made a considerable progress in several of the higher branches of science, particularly natural history, moral philosophy, and theology. I quitted the college with the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and being now master of my actions and fortune, I went to the capital, and took lodgings in Bishopsgate-street, at the house of my aunt, Mrs. Williams.

My aunt, though not in opulent circumstances, was visited by a numerous circle of friends ; and Miss Vernon, the only daughter of a rich merchant was among the number.

This young lady had been educated at the same boarding-school with Mrs. Williams's daughter, and the same evening after my arrival I was introduced to the dear cause of all my sorrows.

Miss Vernon came in her father's coach, and after giving the footman directions to come at a late hour to conduct her home, she tripped into the room where we sat with all the vivacity and ease of a Grace. My cousin Sophia, who had received her visitor at the door, now introduced me, and I shall never forget the lively but modest air with which Miss Vernon received my compliments.

Our conversation was desultory and general. The young ladies talked of dress, public amusements, and the private masquerades, with that pleasing volubility for which the sex have ever

been celebrated. I was surprised at the knowledge of fashionable life evinced by the young ladies, and blushed at my own rusticity and incapacity to judge respecting the important vicissitudes of fashion.

My aunt introduced my favourite topic of poetry, and I discovered that our fair visitor was by no means deficient in taste ; insomuch that the sprightliness of her disposition, which had appeared to me as levity, and the freedom of her manners, which in reality was only good-breeding, rendered her perfectly enchanting.

From poetry the natural transition was to its sister art ; and our visitor, at the request of my aunt, favoured us with a tune on the harp, which she accompanied with a voice attuned by the melody of love.

Oh, how exquisite were my feelings at that moment ! I sat gazing on the lovely musician, and when she ceased, I felt a sudden blush overspread my face, while my faltering tongue refused to join in the praise bestowed by the rest of the company. Miss Vernon perceived my confusion. She smiled—it was the triumphant smile of beauty, which beholds with complacency—another votary chained to her footstool.

In the course of the evening, she mentioned to my cousin that her father intended to give a ball in honour of her birth-day. She promised to send a card of invitation to the dear inmate of her youth on that joyous occasion. Sophia gaily said, “ Can

I persuade my dear Miss Vernon to favour my cousin Henry with a card?"—"Certainly," replied she, with a sweet smile; "I shall be happy to see the gentleman at our social party." I bowed. "Can you dance, sir?" said my sprightly cousin. "Yes, my dear," replied I; "few of my fellow-students took more pleasure in bounding 'on the light fantastic toe' than myself."—"O, I am glad to hear it," said Sophia, "then, my lovely young friend, do honour Henry with your hand as partner." Miss Vernon blushed—it was the suffusion of surprise, not anger; and before she could answer, my aunt joined in the same request, adding—"Such an honour will be a complete introduction to my nephew, and smooth the way to his intercourse with the polite world."—"Well, madam, since you think this trifling favour of so much consequence, I do consent." I arose, approached Miss Vernon, and expressed my thanks in a manner that called up a blush into her animated countenance. Soon afterwards the carriage arrived, I handed her into it, and returned to my friends, whom I found laughing at my bashfulness.

My aunt congratulated me on my good fortune, and told me that their visitor was an heiress, and her fortune it was conjectured would be at least one hundred thousand pounds. "Aye, Henry," cried Sophia, "if you could obtain Miss Vernon, it would be more to your purpose than wasting your time poring over musty volumes." I laughed

at her raillery ; but on retiring to my bed-chamber, found that not only love but ambition had taken possession of my heart.

On the following day cards of invitation for my cousin and myself were sent by Miss Vernon, and when the evening of her birth-day arrived, we went to Mr. Vernon's elegant house in Guildford-street.

Here we found an assemblage of fashionable people, and were received by Mr. Vernon with politeness. My cousin congratulated Miss Vernon on the felicitous occasion, and I added my tribute of good wishes to her's. We found her surrounded by young men of fashion, who learned with evident chagrin that I was to be her partner. She was dressed in a white muslin robe, a braid of sky-coloured silk net-work confined her fine light brown hair, except a few short tresses that fashion had directed to conceal part of her forehead.

Maria Vernon was just twenty years of age, of a stature which combined grace with majesty. Her form was of that divine proportion—that feminine elegance peculiar to English beauty. Her countenance was oval ; her complexion fair ; her eyes blue ; her nose rather in a right line with her forehead, yet so beautifully formed, that it added much to the expression of the whole contour ; her mouth was rather large, but the insidious smile of gaiety that played along her lips, the soft and delicate bloom of her cheek, the wit and sen-

sibility which sparkled in her eyes, and the majestic and modest purity that adorned her fair virgin brow, rendered her the admiration of the beholder.

Proud of the honour of her hand, I accompanied her through the mazes of the dance with bounding agility ; when we ceased, she joined a party of ladies, and by a significant look let me understand that she did not wish for my particular attention. I felt somewhat abashed ; but a young nobleman with whom I had been acquainted at college, now entered the ball-room, and after bowing to the company, advanced and expressed his satisfaction at our meeting. This attention from his lordship effected wonders in my favour. The polite and the gay, who flutter in the festive scenes of high life, are ever assiduous in paying that deference to adventitious eminence which they absurdly refuse to personal merit. In so large a party, however, it was in vain to look for the benign influence of social cordiality ; affectation usurped the place of sincerity, and the company parted at a late hour with mutual politeness, and reciprocal indifference. There were, however, a few exceptions ; and amongst the rest, my noble friend, my cousin, my partner, and myself.

Miss Vernon, on parting with my cousin Sophia, whispered that “ she would soon pay us a morning visit,” and we returned home much gratified with our reception and entertainment.

I now felt all the romantic enthusiasm of love. The image of Miss Vernon continually occupied

my imagination; and if the insuperable obstacle of disparity of fortune for a moment presented itself to my mind, I turned from it with abhorrence, and fondly cherished the delicious hope of obtaining the object of my tenderest wishes.

With a heart glowing with genuine passion, I wrote a letter expressive of my sentiments, which I sent to Miss Vernon, and I soon received a modest and favourable answer.

While we indulged in this fond intercourse, Maria's father accidentally met with my letter. Naturally irritable, and inflated with all the insolence of prosperity, his rage was ungovernable. He wrote to me a most reproachful letter, forbidding me his house. The amicable intercourse between my cousin and her friend was interrupted; and worse than all, a nobleman of distinguished rank and fortune offered to lead my beloved Maria to the hymeneal altar.

These distressing incidents almost deprived me of reason. I rambled into St. James's Park, threw myself on one of the benches, unmindful of the interesting groupes that glided along the mall. The martial pomp and military music of a detachment that passed along to relieve guard at the palace, roused me; and as I slowly sauntered along, viewing the verdant enclosure, the canal, and the majestic groves which extend their shade over the promenade, I beheld Mr. Vernon approach. He walked up to me with a proud air, and exclaimed, "Sir, are you Mr. Aston?" I

replied, “ Yes, that is my name, sir.”—“ Then, sir, I am sorry to say, that you have been the cause of much unhappiness to me ; you have seduced the affections of my child, and I now desire a formal renunciation of your claim to her hand.”—“ Sir,” replied I, “ your intemperate conduct has altogether been ungentleman-like—your letter contained the feeble effusions of insolence, and I never will consent to dissolve that sacred union of hearts which has taken place between your daughter and me.”—Mr. Vernon, with a countenance inflamed with rage, raised his walking-stick, and aimed a blow at my head, which I warded off with my arm. I sprung in ; closed with him ; wrenched the stick from his hand ; and breaking it, I threw it over the pales of the inclosure. He left me muttering revenge ; and I returned to my aunt’s, more disconsolate than ever.

In the course of the evening we received the news that the marriage of my noble rival and Miss Vernon was to be solemnized on the following day : and about two hours afterwards a letter by the post was delivered to Sophia. It was from Miss Vernon, and enclosed one to me, containing the following words :

“ DEAR HENRY,

“ Meet me this night in the field near the Foundling Hospital——come alone——the time is precious——Adieu!

“ M. VERNON.”

The evident perturbation with which this billet was written, convinced me there was no time to be lost. The idea of an elopement, and a trip to Gretna in Scotland, suggested itself. I hastened to engage a post-chaise, which was to wait at Somer's Town; and putting a case of loaded pistols, and about two hundred pounds into my pocket, I hastily took leave of my aunt and my cousin, and flew to the rendezvous.

My lovely Maria was there before me; her eyes were suffused with tears, and she almost fainted as I held her in my arms. "Henry," said she, with a querulous voice, "I am going to be forced to marry another when my heart is devoted to you. My father is inexorable, and no alternative remained but either to obey his cruel commands, and become wretched against my inclination, or to throw myself upon your protection, and be *misérable with my inclination*." I soothed her sorrows, vowed that my life should be devoted to her, and mentioned an elopement to Scotland, as the only effectual mode to elude her father's austerity. She started at the idea—hesitated a moment, then melting into tears, leaned on my arm, and sighed consent. I conducted her over the fields, handed her into the carriage, and we set out with a velocity of motion quite in unison with my feelings.

We travelled without ever stopping, except merely to change horses, and snatch a light refreshment; for Maria, who like myself, dreaded a pursuit, was urgent to continue our journey without

rest. Though I was delighted with her earnestness, I dreaded the effects of such rapid and continued motion on her health.

On the evening of the second day we passed through Carlisle, crossed the river Eden, and a brook called the Sark, which is the boundary between the two kingdoms, and soon afterwards arrived at Gretna.—The indissoluble tie of marriage united the fate of my dearest Maria with mine. A serene joy animated her eyes, while the soft blush of virgin innocence lightened over her countenance as I impressed the kiss of connubial love on her lips. We then returned to an inn, the best which the village afforded, where my youthful and virtuous bride crowned my triumphant wishes.

Next day we returned to England; and passing through Carlisle, we slept in Penrith. On the second day of our journey to London, we passed leisurely through the picturesque scenery of Westmoreland, and viewed the lofty ridges of Stanmore with all the delight which nature inspires. As our chaise slowly ascended the rising ground in a remote part of the road between Brough and Stanmore, a post-coach suddenly came in view, and as it approached, to our astonishment we beheld Mr. Vernon and another gentleman.

Maria endeavoured to conceal her face; but Mr. Vernon recognizing us at the first glance, sprung out of the carriage, and with execrations commanded me to restore his daughter. “Never, but with my life, Sir,” replied I, “will I relinquish

Maria ; she is my wife—you have now no further authority over her.” “Detested miscreant!” cried he, foaming with rage, and advancing to the side of the chaise, “come down, and give me the satisfaction which my outraged honour requires.”—“No, Sir ; never will I lift my hand against the father of my wife.”—“Perish, then, wretch !” exclaimed he, presenting a pistol, which he aimed at my head. He fired, the ball entered my shoulder, and my unhappy bride, giving a deep groan, sunk down in the chaise beside me.

My blood flowed profusely from the wound ; yet still I was able to assist my Maria ; and Mr. Vernon, with all the terror which accompanies the mind of an assassin, threw himself into his coach, and drove off.

The post-boy assisted me in restoring Maria to her senses ; and when I assured her that I was but slightly hurt, she became somewhat composed, and we proceeded slowly to a village in a valley on the side of Stanmore.

A farmer, touched with our situation, offered me his house as an asylum, and dispatched one of his servants to Brough for a surgeon, who came, extracted the ball, and dressed my wound ; while my dearest spouse watched over me with fond solicitude.

Few instances have occurred in human affairs of so extreme a reverse of situation as that of my wife. The blooming, elegant, and accomplished Miss Vernon, the celebrated toast of numerous

rivals, and heiress of a rich merchant, was transported from her father's elegant mansion in Guildford-street, to a small farm-house in a remote valley of Westmoreland. She, who had been attended by obsequious lacquies and rival beaux, was now herself the attendant on a wounded husband, by an imprudent union with whom she was precipitated from the eminence of grandeur to the humble vale of obscurity.

Her only consolation was that richest of cordials, love; connubial tenderness rendered her fatigues, her watchings, and her fears, tolerable; and my convalescence diffused a cheerfulness through her bosom, which illumined her lovely countenance, and rendered her dulcet voice still more affectingly sweet.

Our rural friends were assiduous in their attention. The singularity of our adventure, and particularly the youth and beauty of my wife, excited their sympathy and admiration; while their consciousness of our superiority prevented their making improper enquiries.

William Wentworth the farmer, his wife, and daughter Nancy, together with four men and two maid servants, constituted the family. That characteristic cleanliness, for which the English nation is deservedly praised, was apparent in the farmer's house. The apartments, furniture, and utensils, all were demonstrative of the activity and cleanliness of dame Wentworth; while the dairy,

under the direction of the blooming Nancy, was the seat of purity itself.

This charming girl devoted every moment of leisure to my Maria, who was consoled by the sympathetic attachment of an unsophisticated mind. In a few days I was able to leave our apartment ; and, accompanied by my wife, made short excursions through the surrounding fields.

When I was perfectly recovered, Maria agreed to take an afternoon's ramble with me among the picturesque scenes of Stanmore. We ascended the hills, and beheld the rural scenery of Westmoreland and Cumberland, which shone in the simple magnificence of nature.

At a considerable distance the little town of Brough appeared in perspective ; but indistinct from the distance. The rocky ridge of Stanmore above it was embellished with an elegant mansion, with gardens in the rear, and a fort erected on the very summit of the hill. The vast extensive Moorlands of Stanmore reared their rugged curved summits, and, enlightened by sunshine, threw their shadows over the intermediate valleys. Just below us appeared Stanmore-dale, the charming valley in which hospitality had prepared our recess. The striking contrast between the bleak and barren moor and this fertile valley, was delightful.

It is on the southern side of Stanmore, and begins abruptly, and as it were bursting from the

confinement of a ridge of rocks, over which the highway to Carlisle is made. The dale gradually widens for about half a mile, when it becomes narrow, and is bounded by a distant hill. It is about two miles long, and more than half a mile wide, sloping on each side to the bottom, where a clear brook flows along. The dale is inhabited by farmers, whose neat stone houses, adorned with groves and gardens, are scattered irregularly over the landscape, as it suited the convenience or choice of the proprietors. There is but one elegant house in this valley, and its owner, by extravagance, has involved himself in debt; while his neighbours, who live on their own little farms, enjoy the fruits of their industry and temperance, in the blessings of health, plenty, and independence.

Stanmore-dale is entirely laid out in meadows and pastures; consequently the produce is cattle and hay. The farmers annually sell large quantities of butter, cheese, and black cattle; and are supplied with flour from Barnard Castle, in Yorkshire. Thus they live secluded in a happy state of rural innocence, enjoying the bounties of Providence, without a participation in the excess or luxury of polished society. They seldom have occasion to employ the physician; quarrels and law-suits are unknown among them; and they live in a most enviable state of content.

We contemplated this happy valley, on which the sun shone with mildest radiance. It was the

middle of June, and numbers of the Westmoreland lads and lasses were scattered over the meadows, where they plied the rake and the fork with alacrity. The cheerful sounds of their gaiety reached our ears, where we sat on the mossy summit; while the light shining on the beautiful sloping green fields newly raked, the soft shades of the half-illuminated groves, and the numerous groups of busy hay-makers, rendered this scene animated and picturesque.

My dear companion felt the force of rural beauty, and expressed her wish to live secluded in this charming retirement. I was surprised, and turning to her with a look of admiration, while she fondly leaned on my arm, I exclaimed, “And can Maria forego the gratifications of polished society, to live with me in Stanmore-dale?”—“Yes, my love,” replied she, while her eyes beamed with inexpressible benignity and tenderness, “I would make any sacrifice to contribute to your happiness. But ah! my dear, I recollect with anguish, the displeasure of a father, whose favourite I once was—a father, who rashly raised his hand against the life of my husband. My chief regret,” added she, sighing, “is, that instead of a rich heiress, I have given only a poor and friendless girl to your arms.”—“My dear, dear Maria,” cried I, embracing her, “I loved you for yourself alone; your heart was the treasure to which I aspired, and blessed with that, riches are contemptible in my eyes: but why, my love, do you continue in Westmoreland?”

Would it not be better to return to the metropolis? I have friends, and by literary or commercial pursuits, may be able to contribute to your comfort and happiness. My aunt and her Sophia will be glad to renew a friendly intercourse with us.”—“ Ah! Henry,” said she, while the tears flowed from her beauteous eyes, “ never, never can I bear to meet my incensed parents, my sneering acquaintance or the ridicule of the haughty and malignant votaries of custom and fashion. I doubt not that our names have already been bandied from one scandalous tongue to another; wretched witticisms on my elopement, by unprincipled news-writers, have amused the public; and the malignity of my envious rivals, now nearly extinct, would only be revived by my appearance in the world. Let me continue in retirement—but share it with me, Henry, for you are my all—my little world!”—“ And you, my beloved Maria,” said I, overcome by her tears, “ are my only treasure—to your happiness I dedicate the residue of my life: your request shall be obeyed.”

We descended from the heights of Stanmore, arm in arm; and the same evening I purchased a small meadow at the extremity of Wentworth’s farm, for the ground of a cottage, garden, and shrubbery.

I wrote to my aunt, with a short account of our situation, and empowered her to sell out two thousand pounds of my property in the funds, and remit the money by the Carlisle mail-coach. My affectionate relative sent me the cash, together

with a letter from my cousin Sophia, purposing to pay us a visit when our cottage was finished.

Abundantly supplied with money, I turned my whole attention to the comfort of Maria, and the erection of our cottage, which was built according to the plan suggested by her elegant taste. The garden and nursery were also laid out agreeably to her directions.

I went to Carlisle and purchased a collection of books, music, and musical instruments, for my Maria; and a variety of plain furniture for our cottage. Her mind was soothed and harmonized by my tenderness. I read to her; she sung and played on her harp to amuse me; and we varied our occupations and amusements with frequent rambles. A considerable degree of her attention was engaged by the garden; and with her own fair hand she planted a few slips of ozier and woodbine around a small harbour.

Towards the end of autumn our cottage was finished, aired, furnished, and completely habitable. We removed from the farmer's hospitable dwelling; and a number of honest rustics assisted in placing the furniture in the different apartments.

The cottage consisted of a kitchen, a pantry, a parlour, and three bed-chambers. I hired two maid-servants and a boy. My dear Maria was now a plain cottager; but her graceful air, the intelligence that animated her aspect, and the elegant simplicity of her dress, would have induced a poet to celebrate her as the genius of Stanmore-dale.

Soon after our removal to the cottage, I wrote an invitation to Sophia; and in the course of a week she arrived in the Carlisle mail-coach. The joy of my wife at this proof of my cousin's attachment was unbounded. She clasped the dear bosom-friend of her youth in her arms, and tears of joy glistened in her eyes. Our little party now became interesting. We received the Morning Chronicle and Courier regularly by the post; and the Reviews, and most interesting periodical publications, particularly the Monthly Review and Monthly Mirror. The latter was most acceptable to the ladies, as it gave an interesting history of the stage, and the "living manners."

Winter came, and we contrived to pass it with considerable felicity; but, notwithstanding our domestic comfort, and the cheerfulness of Sophia's conversation, my wife became habitually pensive. Doubtless, the customary enjoyments and elegancies which she had shared in high life, had given her mind a luxurious cast, which not even love and friendship could altogether change. Nay, I sometimes found her alone, with sorrow portrayed in her tearful and expressive eyes. The loss of her parent's affection had certainly inflicted a deep wound in her breast, but she studiously concealed her anguish from me, lest I should reproach myself of the cause. Amiable and unfortunate Maria; yes, our imprudence was the cause of thy sorrows and untimely death!

Early in the ensuing spring my wife blessed my

arms with a son, and this pledge of our mutual love seemed to revive her constitutional vivacity. For a few weeks after his birth she suckled him herself; but a dangerous cold not only incapacitated her from the solicitous task of nurse, but threatened her life. Medical skill was exerted to restore the health of my languishing wife, but in vain. A consumption, which baffled human wisdom and the power of medicine, soon made those inroads on her frame, which declared the certain approach of death.

Sophia wept over the lovely martyr of indiscretion, but for myself I could not weep—a species of horror bordering on despair seemed to paralyse my feelings. Every time that I looked on my Maria's face, so lately the abode of triumphant beauty, I beheld the gradual ravages of the destroyer, and accused myself as her murderer! Her voice, which had been “the melodious voice of love,” was now broken, feeble, and querulous; and the symmetry of a form, which had been the admiration of thousands, now shrunk into an enervated and emaciated frame. Yet still the “human face divine” retained its ineffable sweetness—still the languishing eye occasionally emanated some of those irradiating beams which had first warmed my bosom with love!

Maria expressed a desire to see her parents, and receive an assurance of their forgiveness before she expired. She wrote to them the following comprehensive letter:

“ DEAR PARENTS:

“ I am dying. A natural decay is removing me from this earthly scene. Oh! mitigate my expiring anguish by bestowing your forgiveness and blessing upon your affectionate daughter,

“ MARIA ASTON.

“ *Cottage, Stanmore-dale, Westmoreland,*
10th of June, 1798.”

All hopes of my Maria's recovery being gone, Sophia assisted me in alleviating her pains, and soothing her mind. Our infant son was daily brought to her bed-side, while she wept over him with all a mother's fondness.

It was now the prime of Spring, and one evening, a little before sun-set, she felt herself so much better, by breathing the pure and salubrious western breeze admitted at the chamber-windows, that she expressed a desire to rise, and once more behold the cheerful face of Nature.

Leaning on Sophia and myself, she left her apartment with tottering steps: we conducted her to the garden. The softened radiance of the setting sun gilded the landscape with rosy light. The groves, the fields, and gardens, all appeared decked in vernal beauty, and breathing fragrance; the song of the thrush, the woodlark, and the red-breast, resounded in the groves; while the feeble bleatings of the lambs, returning with their mothers to the fold, combined to give a perfect idea of rural tranquillity. The voices of the sprightly

youth of both sexes were heard from the adjacent cottages, and the whole combination of objects and sounds was well calculated to inspire

“ Vernal delight and joy, able to drive
 “ All sadness but despair.”

Such was not the sadness of my dear Maria. Her meek spirit bowed with resignation before the throne of her Creator; and she considered this parting glance at the beauties of the visible creation as a tribute of the heart to the Sovereign of Nature. She requested to be conducted to the arbour, where she beheld the oziers and woodbines which she had planted, thriving with vigorous vegetation, and intertwining their luxurious shoots. “ They bloom,” said she, with a languid smile, “ but the planter fades: well, such is the will of Heaven, and I bow before the benign Being who chastens whom he loves!” Saying this, she turned her eyes towards heaven. “ How beautiful and tranquil are the azure heavens,” said Maria, “ the pure abode of peace and felicity; and this earth too is productive of innumerable gifts of Providence. Spring! enchanting spring! the landscape brightens in thy smiles; the cheerful notes of the birds, the mellow pipe of the shepherd, and the love-tuned voice of the village-maid, are all inspired by thee!”

She ceased speaking, in consequence of a sudden faintness, and casting a last glance on the

surrounding scenes, leaned on our arms, and was re-conducted to her bed-chamber.

Her debility became so great that we feared she would expire before the answer expected from her parents should arrive. “Alas,” said she, in a querulous tone, “they have rejected my last request; but I must not repine; I have a husband and a friend, to whom my memory will be dear!” Just as she expressed these words, I was called out of the room by one of my servants, and on going into the kitchen, found one of Mr. Vernon’s footmen waiting. He bowed: “Sir,” said he, “my master and mistress are coming, and they sent me before, that your lady might be prepared for the interview.” I hastened with the news to Maria, and though I imparted it with trembling caution, it threw her spirits in a most violent agitation. When she became a little more calm, she exclaimed in a tone of joy, “Then I am forgiven! my beloved parents will assist in closing my eyes. Oh! this is heaven on earth!”

In about an hour afterwards, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon arrived. I met them at the door of the cottage, and bowed, but was unable to speak. Mr. Vernon appeared equally confused; and the lady advancing, while the tears rolled down her cheeks, begged to be conducted to her daughter.

On the appearance of her parents, Maria fainted away. Her mother hastened to assist Sophia in restoring her to life; and in a few seconds she opened her eyes, which she turned on her father

with an expression of entreaty that was irresistible. “My dear child,” cried he, taking her hand, “be composed; we are come to assist in restoring you to health, and you may be assured of mine and your mother’s forgiveness and unalterable affection.” “My ever-beloved parent,” replied she, pressing his hand to her lips; “yes, you have indeed restored more than health, you have restored that happiness which your indulgent love so often conferred. I shall now expire like a conqueror; my heart triumphs at the consummation of my hopes, and I feel as if I were in heaven already!”

A serene joy animated her features at this moment, and her eyes beamed with the ecstasy which filled her soul. This rapture, however, was transient. A ghastly paleness and dying langour suddenly succeeded these smiles of celestial benignity. She gasped for breath; and as I stood at a respectful distance behind her parents, she feebly articulated my name. They beckoned to me; I approached, and her beautiful face again beamed with the smile of love. “Oh! beloved father,” said she, in a solemn and broken tone, “if ever Maria was dear to you living, and if you would wish to soften her dying anguish, let me witness your reconciliation with my husband.”

Mr. Vernon melted into tears; she united our hands, and a gentle sigh, expressive of her satisfaction, evinced how grateful this scene was to her heart. “One request more, my dear parents, and

I have done: will you adopt my son, and cherish him as your own, for my sake?" "We will, my daughter," replied Mr. Vernon: her mother bowed, but could not answer for tears. "Then I am blest," she cried; "praise to the Deity, who has in mercy touched the hearts of my parents with compassion for their child!"

Our boy was brought in by the nurse; Maria, with a look of tenderness, desired that he might be given to her mother; then addressing her friends in a voice scarcely articulate, she cried, "Farewell!"—Her eye was now turned in search of one still dearer than her parents: it was a husband; and the instant her eyes met mine, as I stood beside the bed, she smiled; "Henry," said she, faintly, "come and sit beside me; do not leave me now, I wish to have you near me." I threw myself on my knees; I seized her hand; it was cold—yet feeling had not totally forsaken it, for she gently returned the pressure of mine. "My husband," said the dying charmer, "I feel that I am going. I shall be happy:—dear Henry, do not grieve for me, but continue to love our child." I breathed a secret ejaculation to the Deity for mercy on her departing spirit. I gazed on that countenance which even the ghastliness of death had not wholly deprived of its beauty. Maria turned on me her dying eyes. A smile of unutterable tenderness for a moment illumined them: *it was the triumph of love over death*; for the next moment, turning her eyes towards

heaven with a look of solemn devotion, she expired with a gentle sigh. A sudden giddiness seized my brain—I sunk on the floor in a state of insensibility——

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Immediately after the funeral of my wife, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon returned to London with my little son, whom they took under their protection. My grief gradually subsided into a tender melancholy, and I prepared to leave Stanmore-dale, and conduct my cousin Sophia to the metropolis. Accordingly I left my cottage and garden to the care of Farmer Wentworth, with an earnest charge that the arbour and shrubs planted by Maria should be weeded, and preserved from injury. I then set out with Sophia for the metropolis, where we arrived in safety.

My relatives endeavoured to dispel my grief by various amusements, but in vain. They advised me to travel, as a remedy for my unavailing sorrow. Accordingly I set out on a summer's tour through England, and once more came in sight of Stanmore-dale.

Farmer Wentworth accompanied me to my cottage, once the scene of felicity ; but it was now solitary and silent as the tomb. Maria's summer-house appeared in all the luxuriance of vegetative beauty: I sprinkled with my tears the intermingled woodbines and osiers which she had planted. I

afterwards visited her grave, where a tomb-stone inscribed with her name had been placed by the grateful farmer. I saw for the last time the little hillock which concealed the remains of Maria, and on returning to the village, I bade the farmer and his family adieu, and pursued my tour to Bath.

I drank the waters for a few days; but they were inefficacious—even the fountain of Hygeia herself could not heal a broken heart. Resigned to my approaching dissolution, I calmly await the moment when I am to be re-united to Maria—and shall without regret sleep the sleep of death, “*Till the long night be past and the last morn arise!*”

THE
ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT.

Two European travellers having made observations on the extensive regions and various nations of Arabia, resolved to extend their enquiries to Persia. For this purpose, having disguised themselves in the Persian habit, they crossed the gulph which divides southern Persia from Arabia Felix, and mounted on two excellent horses proceeded on their intended route to Ispahan. In the evening of their first day's journey they came in sight of a habitation, the beauty and seclusion of which, occasioned them to stop for a moment. A cottage environed by ever-greens stood in the centre of a garden, on the southern side of which a vineyard displayed its rich purple and large white clusters of ripe grapes; a variety of aromatic plants and flowers in full bloom adorned the edges of the walks, while a clear stream murmuring in its pebbly channel flowed, amid the garden. This beautiful spot was enclosed with strong pales, and a gate in front opened to the path which led to the entrance of the cottage.

A venerable man in the dress of a Persian Imaun, or priest, came from the mansion, and invited the travellers to stop for the night; this hospitable invitation was particularly welcome,

as they were fatigued, and in a place which seemed at a considerable distance from any town or village. After supper, which is the principal meal in Persia, the host was inquisitive respecting European nations and manners, and his guests, one of whom was an Englishman and the other a Frenchman, contributed to his amusement by lively descriptions of their respective countries. They were also curious, and expressed a wish to know the history of a man, who, from his conversation, appeared well acquainted with all the elegancies of Asiatic magnificence. The Imaun sighed, yet seemed pleased with the curiosity of his guests, for whose amusement he began the following narrative :

My name is Askeri, I was born in Ispahan, and my father who was an opulent merchant in that city, spared neither pains nor expence in my education. With the docility of an unsophisticated and curious mind, I imbibed instruction, and a succession of masters was employed to aid the developement of powers which the partiality of parental love magnified into a prodigy. You must not, however, accuse me of egotism when I assert, that in my twenty-second year I was considered the most accomplished scholar in Ispahan. But my knowledge, though general, was superficial ; the arcana of abstruse science was beyond my power of acquirement, but in the more elegant and ornamental studies I made a proficiency. Painting and drawing were arts in which I was al-

lowed to excel; not only portraits, but landscapes, and even groups illustrative of some affecting tale narrated by our poets were familiar to my pencil, and my father charmed with the specimens of my art, made them the common theme of his conversation.

The approbation of my father and his friends operated as a stimulus to my genius; I produced a painting of the Persian hero, Rostum, and the praises lavished on my production inflamed my vanity. Among other visitors who came to view this painting, was Soliman, the Beglerbeg of Ispahan; he was a man of taste, and although he agreed in the general approbation of the piece, he judiciously pointed out some defects. I was sent for, the defects were mentioned by the governor, and I promised to rectify them. I observed that he viewed me with attention, and when he departed desired me to bring the painting to his palace when finished. Incited by that desire of eminence so natural to every aspiring mind, I retouched my painting with the utmost care. I softened the tints which had been censured as too glaring, and by a more natural distribution of light and shade produced a stronger and more pleasing illusion. The subject was, the hero Rostum haranguing his troops before a battle, and I succeeded so well in giving animation to the aspect of the General, grace to his attitude, and expression to the countenances of the warriors whom he was supposed to exhort, that my painting was considered a masterly performance.

When I had finished this historical piece, I carried it to the palace of Soliman. He was then engaged in the duties of his high station, and I waited about an hour in a superb apartment. At length he appeared ; I uncovered my painting by his desire ; he examined it minutely and exclaimed : “ Ingenious Askeri, I honour thy talents, and shall henceforth be thy patron ! Come my friend, you must be my guest to-day ; I shall introduce you to some of the first persons of distinction in Ispahan.”

I expressed my acknowledgments for the high honour conferred upon me by his offer of friendship, accepted his invitation, and requested permission to present my picture as a small proof of my esteem. He appeared pleased with the present, and having called a servant with orders to carry it into his hall of audience, he led me into another apartment, when he introduced me to several courtiers who were his visitors.

On my return home I related the polite reception of the Beglerbeg to my father ; he was pleased at my success, but blamed me for having given away my picture, which disappointed him of the pleasure of shewing it to his friends. I promised to paint another piece on any subject he might select, and he was appeased.

On the following morning I was summoned to attend Soliman. He received me with the candour of friendship. “ You have already gratified me, Askeri,” said he, “ by a present, permit me to make you one in return.” He then presented

me with a diamond ring of uncommon lustre, which I received respectfully and put on my finger. “And now young artist,” said he, “will you try your talent at portrait-painting, I want a picture of my favourite daughter.” For this purpose I accompanied him on horseback to a beautiful palace at the bottom of a mountain, about three furlongs or twelve miles from Ispahan. When we approached the palace, “Askeri,” said Soliman, “I confide in thy discretion; my daughter is young and beautiful, she has seldom been unveiled in the presence of men, you will therefore behave with modesty and delicacy. I do not expect you will be able to complete the sketch in one or two sittings, for the subject you will find difficult, and I want a finished resemblance of Corea. You shall have apartments in a distant wing of the palace remote from the residence of the women, but you shall have daily access to the presence of my daughter while requisite.” I promised to be as circumspect as possible; we entered the gates, and I was introduced to the Princess. She was veiled, and when Soliman mentioned the purport of our visit, she trembled with emotion. Soliman smiled, and taking her hand, gaily said, “My daughter need not be alarmed, I have not brought a lover but an artist to her, a modest young man who shares my confidence, and from whose ingenuity I expect something like the image of a favourite child.” The Princess replied in a low voice, “my father’s will shall be obeyed:” she then re-

tired, and Soliman, after a refreshment and smoking a *calean*, gave orders that I should be treated with respect during my stay in the palace. I was conducted to superb apartments, prepared for me, where I found every requisite of the arts of drawing and painting, instruments of music, and a beautiful copy of the poems of Saadee.

About noon the following day I was summoned by a female to attend the Princess. Collecting my pencils, pallet, and colours, I followed the servant: and as I passed along the saloon an indescribable emotion agitated my frame. The idea that a young lady was to be presented in all her natural charms to my closest observation, promised a gratification to youthful curiosity; but the daughter of Soliman might be homely, nay ugly, for the partiality of a parent can embellish a beloved object with imaginary charms. She might on the other hand be beautiful, so much the better, my taste would be improved by drawing from a perfect model. Thus reasoning like a mere artist who had never felt the power of woman's eye, I was conducted to an inner apartment where Corea was seated on a sofa.

She was veiled, and on a signal her attendant retired. Alone with a young lady, I was not less embarrassed than herself; she continued silent for a moment, then in a soft voice said, "As we must converse, favour me with your name."—"Askeri, my Princess," replied I."—"My name is Corea," said she, and as I see you are ready to exercise

your art, I am ready to unveil." She then threw off her thin green veil, and discovered not a homely but a lovely countenance. An aspect in which angelic innocence seemed combined with feminine sweetness ; a face blooming with the perfection of health, and a form irradiated by the beauty of symmetry and the dignity of the pure spirit which gave it animation ; eyes glistening with the mild lustre of intellectual vigour, and a mouth adorned with the delightful smile of benignity. But who could describe Corea ? Words and colours were equally incompetent to the purpose of giving a faithful image of feminine perfection.

I approached this lovely being, whose charms broke forth like a celestial vision on my enraptured mind. Corea perceived my emotion, she smiled, and her smiles encouraged me to begin my task. I sketched an outline, compared it with the original, and sighing, threw it away. Again I attempted to trace the image of Corea, and again felt my incapacity. Several concurrent circumstances contributed to my embarrassment. I had never before drawn from a living female model ; I beheld before me a young woman adorned with the graces of nature, whose charms instead of being immature were even luxuriant. The living eye informed with intelligence and adorned with the liquid lustre of health ; the beauteous lip fresh with youth, and expressive of love ; the graceful swell of the rising bosom, and the innumerable charms which decorate the form of woman, all presented

themselves to my admiring eyes, and disconcerted the skill of the artist. Instead of a correct outline, I contemplated the beautiful original: Corea, although unacquainted with the principles of my art seemed to doubt my proficiency; for I had now studied her person nearly an hour without being able to sketch any resemblance. I apologized to the Princess for my delay, complained that my pencils were not properly prepared, and besought her indulgence to permit me to retire. "Go then, Askeri, since you wish it," said she, with a charming smile, "to-morrow I shall require your attendance, for I am desirous that my portrait should be finished with all possible expedition. Retire," continued she, "I am not accustomed to converse with a man alone and unveiled." With these words a slight blush softly stole over her face but instantly disappeared, she put on her veil, I bowed, and retired to my apartments, where an elegant repast awaited me. But the calls of appetite were absorbed by a more powerful passion. The figure, the voice, and the benignity of the too beautiful Corea filled my fancy, and excited a palpitation in my heart, unfelt before. I could think of nothing but the daughter of Soliman, and while I felt ashamed of my imbecility as an artist, I resolved to sketch an image of transcendant loveliness, however imperfect might be the copy.

I retired early to my couch, and after an hour or two of cogitation, in which the image of Corea continually recurred to my fancy, I sunk into a state of insensibility.

My second attempt as an artist in the presence of the Princess, was more successful than the first. I had slept well although in love, for paradoxical as it may appear to amatory poets and love-sick votaries, Nature indulges even a lover with the balsamic refreshment of sleep. I awoke fresh, vigorous, and with an imagination glowing with the forms of beauty. In this enthusiastic mood I was again conducted to the apartment of Corea; she unveiled her seductive beauties, my fancy caught fire at the sight; I snatched up my instruments of art, and under the united influence of the enthusiasm of genius and love, I sketched the outline of feminine elegance with a sparkling eye, and a steady hand. When I had finished my sketch, I gazed alternately on the copy and the original; never did I feel an equal emotion of triumphant pride: the sketch was a perfect resemblance of the beauteous form which sat before me, and my heart throbbed with the consciousness of having produced what would be high in the estimation of Soliman.

Corea observing my emotions to be of a pleasurable nature, desired to see what I had produced; I presented my sketch, and she uttered an exclamation of surprize. Taking up the imperfect sketch which I had produced the day before, she compared it with the present effort of my hand. "How different!" exclaimed the Princess, "how poor an attempt was that of yesterday, but how exquisitely correct this of the present hour!"

Great are the delights communicable by the approbation of a beautiful and amiable woman. The most delicious moments of a man's existence are illumined by the smiles of the dear object of his love; his most exalted sublunary enjoyments are those conferred by female blandishments. Woman is his nurse in infancy, his companion in manhood, his consolation in decrepitude, and his ministering angel amid the pangs of dissolution. What do we owe of pleasure to that amiable being, and ah! how much of pain is too often inflicted by the imprudence of an improper attachment. Such was mine for the blooming, the too lovely *Corea*: I now felt the influence of her charms over my heart, and I sighed on reflecting how great was the disparity placed by accident between me and the object of my warmest wishes.

But instead of wasting my time in querulous and silly soliloquies, I set my invention to work to improve, what I now considered a most propitious opportunity. My vanity whispered that I was dear to *Corea*.

Daily admitted to the presence of *Corea*, I gradually assumed confidence, and availing myself of those propitious opportunities, ventured to breathe my presumptuous vows of eternal love. The Princess did not appear either surprized or displeased at my temerity; the declaration of my attachment seemed to have been expected, yet she blushed and turned pale alternately, when she

beheld me on my knees before her entreating her forgiveness and compassion. “ Rise, Askeri, rise,” said she, in a voice attuned by tenderness, “ I have only to blame myself for the passion I have inspired ; but when my father introduced an artist, I did not expect an aspiring lover.”—“ Charming Princess,” replied I, in an impassioned tone, “ who could gaze on your beauties without adoration ? It now only remains for you to doom your daring slave to chains or death, or to raise him from the horrors of despair, to the felicity of successful love.” Corea blushed. “ I have no wish to inflict pain on Askeri,” said she, holding out her hand, which I kissed with rapturous exultation, “ the difference of rank vanishes, when put in competition with merit like yours.”

Happy in the confidence and affection of the fairest Princess in Ispahan, the few days that I continued in the palace of Soliman, realized my ideas of paradise. Joy, pleasure, rapture, alternately filled my bosom with an excess of delight, which bordered on pain. Alas ! those fleeting joys, those sunny gleams of love were succeeded by disappointment and sorrow.

When I had finished the portrait of Corea, with all the enthusiasm of an artist enamoured of his subject, I presented it to the Princess. She smiled at what she called a master-piece, and presented me in return with a turban gemmed with diamonds, and a crimson sash embroidered with gold by her

own hand. Kneeling I received those precious gifts of my condescending mistress ; I pressed them to my lips, and unable to repress my emotions, burst into tears. Corea was also affected. “ Why do you weep, Askeri ? ” said she in a voice of soothing tenderness, “ you may confide in the fidelity of Corea, she can never love another.” “ Ah, beauteous idol of my heart, I may well grieve : the insuperable obstacles placed by accident between us precludes the hope of our union : I am like a spirit, which having had a glimpse of paradise, is for ever shut out from its blissful regions. I must depart from this palace to-day, and, perhaps, these fond eyes shall never again behold the smiles of my too indulgent Princess.”

Corea trembled and turned pale ; she continued silent for a minute, as if undetermined ; then throwing her white arms around my neck, she embraced me, exclaiming, “ I will fly with you, Askeri, I see and shudder at the dreadful danger of an eternal separation ; let us then fly, my love, to some remote region, where the influence of Soliman is unknown.” This proposal, extravagant as it was, appeared practicable and delightful to a young inexperienced man in the delirium of love. I embraced Corea, her lips were pressed to mine, and ecstasy almost too much for mortal feelings swelled my bosom.

But the mode of escape required contrivance ; it was requisite that I should procure fleet horses, and a disguise, and the second evening from the

time of this interview was fixed upon for our departure ; we knew and cared not whither, if beyond the reach of the dreaded Soliman.

I departed from his palace that afternoon, and in my return to Ispahan, having visited my father, who received me with his usual kindness, I requested a purse of gold that I might purchase two fleet horses. He complied with my request, and desired me to keep up an appearance of splendour suitable to his opulence. “ You are my only child, Askeri,” said he, “ I have reason to be satisfied with your behaviour and accomplishments, and although you are not admitted to the Court of Ispahan now, you probably soon will be as the favourite of Soliman.” I sighed, on reflecting that my patron must in a few hours become my mortal enemy. I thanked my father, however, for his liberality, promised obedience to all his commands, and went to a public stud, where I selected two fine Arabian horses. I then went to a bazar, where the Jews displayed a profusion of various dresses, and bought two complete suits of garments, similar to those worn by our *Imams* or priests, from a conviction that this dress would not only disguise us most completely, but ensure the veneration of whoever we might happen to meet, during our projected flight.

About sunset I walked out disconsolate and alone, along the banks of the Zenderhend. I observed a female, muffled up in a cloak, and covered with a thick veil, who seemed to follow me ;

I stopped in a remote spot, and she approached. “Askeri!” said she, with some hesitation, “is your name Askeri?”—“Yes.”—“Then here is a letter which I was desired to deliver into your own hand.” It was the hand-writing of Corea; I knew it, for during my stay at her rural palace, I had frequent opportunities of seeing her transcribe passages from the Persian poets. Hastily breaking open the letter, I read the following words, evidently written in haste:

“If Askeri is as faithful and adventurous as he is ingenious, he will yet restore the happiness of one devoted to him, and rescue from an abyss of misery, the victim of a father’s ambition and a sovereign’s wantonness. At midnight, this night, an opportunity will offer for the prevention of despair, and the restoration of hope, to the unhappy. At the entrance of the mosque in front of the palace of Soliman, a lady will confide in the honour and fidelity of Askeri.”

I told the messenger that the instructions contained in the letter should be adhered to, and she retired with precipitation. It was now seven o’clock, time was precious; five fleeting hours were to determine whether Corea should be mine or lost to me for ever. I roused my powers with a lover’s enthusiasm, hastened home, and having armed myself with a dagger, and secured a large purse of gold, I made up the robes which I had purchased for a disguise into a bundle; and, favoured by darkness, left my natal mansion unob-

served. I then went to the stable in the suburbs, and prepared my horses.

On the approach of midnight, I went with a palpitating heart to the place of assignation. I perceived amid the gloom a form gliding among the columns, which formed the portico of the mosque; I approached it, and the next minute the trembling Corea sunk fainting into my arms. I encouraged her in a low voice, and having disguised ourselves in the priestly habit, we passed through several streets, and arrived at the gate leading towards my stable without interruption. The guards placed at the gate immediately opened it, when I commanded them, in a low and solemn voice, to let us pass to the abode of an expiring man in the suburb. When they let us pass, I bestowed my benediction with all the formality of a priest, and the soldiers in return bowed their heads with every mark of reverence.

Having thus happily escaped from the city, I placed my Corea on one horse and mounting the other, I led her's by the bridle to the main road, leading to the southern provinces. When morning dawned we betook ourselves to the woods, where we continued till the following evening. I had been provident enough to fill a small bag with bread and fruits, and my lovely companion seemed perfectly well satisfied with her homely fare. She resigned herself entirely to my direction, and reclining nightly on my lap, sunk into a gentle and refreshing slumber.

In less than a week we escaped in safety out of the territories of Aken Mahomed. Our garb ensured respect among the villagers, who were obedient to our orders wherever we came; but I was still fearful of detection, and proceeded by easy journeys to this spot. Delighted with its rural and picturesque beauty, I purchased it, as the future residence of my beloved Corea, and here we plighted our mutual vows, and she received me to her arms.

The narrator now appeared overwhelmed with affliction; his bosom heaved, and sobs and tears demonstrated his excessive sorrow. His guests were affected, and although yet unacquainted with the cause of his grief, they sighed in sympathy. Askeri pressed their hands in his, and in broken accents said: forgive this weakness, my friends.

Corea was now my wife, continued Askeri, and whatever bliss has been described by amatory bards in their most glowing descriptions, was realized by our union. Devoted to the gratification of my spouse, I reared a little paradise around our cottage. In a few months it was evident she would be a mother, and this circumstance increased, if possible, my attention and tenderness. At length the important, the fatal moment arrived; Corea was delivered of a son, but the next hour I was compelled to resign the mother and child to the angel of death!

Askeri now paused, and covering his face with his hands, the tears flowed from his eyes. You

will pardon this weakness, said he, resuming his narrative, but the recollection of what I lost renews my grief. The travellers expressed their acknowledgments for his condescension, and soon afterwards retired to repose. Next morning they accompanied their host to the tomb of his wife and child which stood in a small bower at the rear of the cottage. They viewed this monument of conjugal and parental love, read the inscription to the memory of the deceased, and having again thanked Askeri for his hospitality, they left the interesting Imaun, to enjoy the solitude of his beautiful retirement.

FINIS.

